

THE HOMELESS MUTES:
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EXILE OF PERSIAN EXPATRIATE WOMEN
UNDER THE PATRIARCHY

A dissertation submitted

by

HELEN MAHFAR

to

PACIFICA GRADUATE INSTITUTE

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

This dissertation has been
accepted for the faculty of
Pacifica Graduate Institute by:

Dr. Avedis Panajian, Chair

Dr. Lisa Sloan, Reader

Dr. Jessica Herzog, External Reader

UMI Number: 3701302

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI 3701302

Published by ProQuest LLC (2015). Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.

Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code



ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

OCTOBER 21, 2011

Copyright by
HELEN MAHFAR
2011

ABSTRACT

The Homeless Mutes: The Psychological Exile of Persian Expatriate Women under the Patriarchy

by

Helen Mahfar

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to investigate how expatriate Persian women, living in the United States, experience the damaging influence of traditional patriarchy. The resulting alienation from the self and this alienation's attendant psychological symptoms have been investigated under the conceptual heading of psychological exile, which has been treated by many preeminent schools in the psychotherapeutic tradition. The contemporary dynamic of exile has been set within a historical context, in which the rise of monotheism led to the destruction of matriarchal power structures.

In order to focus on how psychological exile is experienced by Persian women in diaspora, a phenomenological method was adopted: Persian women from three different age groups were interviewed, and their interviews were revised through a collaborative process between the interviewer and participants. The psychological essence of these related experiences was then distilled through the Giorgi method of interview data analysis (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003), combined with Robert Romanyshyn's method of Portrait Analysis (Romanyshyn, personal communications, 2010, 2011). From each of the three groups, emergent common themes were extracted and compared.

The patriarchal system has favored males and devalued females for centuries; each generation transmits its conceptual framework and cultural practices to the next

generation, a process in which women are themselves complicit. This patriarchal system has not just limited the role of women in society, but has also actively damaged them by marring their identities, compromising their feminine natures, hiding them behind the veil of *abroo*, and robbing them of their natural language. These wounds manifest themselves through sexual repression, depression, and various other psychological symptoms.

The elucidation of how these women experience hierarchy's damaging effects will have many implications for therapists treating Persians. This research project was undertaken with the goal of providing a roadmap for therapists treating Persian clients.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

No flower, no fruit. We are at the ends of earth . . . The country lies open on every side, walled in to the west and south, level to the north and to the northeast, with a view to infinity. The sharp incline of the cliffs leads to sky. The river flats, the wormwood scrubs, the grasslands beyond, all lead to a sky that hangs close above us, heavy with snow, or is empty as far as the eye can see or the mind imagine, cloudless, without wings.

But I am describing a state of mind, no place. I am in exile. (David Malouf)

To all of you, who have been the candlelight in my dark lonely nights and to all of you who have held my hand in my journey, Thank you.

I would like to humbly extend my gratitude to all the participants who gave their time and heart so generously to this research. They embody the souls of Persian woman in exile. I am forever grateful to John White, my editor, for his infinite patience, loyalty, dedication, expertise, and kindness. My heartfelt thanks go to the members of my committee, Dr. Panajian, Dr. Sloan, and Dr. Herzog, for their grace, their infinite support, and their steady presence.

I would like to acknowledge and thank my professors at Pacifica: Papa Bishop for helping me find my voice and sing my own song, Dr. Romanyshyn for awakening the rebel, poet, and actress in me, Dr. Panajian for his love of teaching, Dr. Lisa Sloan for sharing the wisdom of Sophia, Dr. Veronica Goodchild for kindling the love of the orphan, Dr. Nelson for sharing her passion, Dr. Coppin for calling into session the congress of hearts, R. Richard Kelliher for his humor, Hocoy for his free spirit, and Drs. Corbett and Slater for their genius. My sincere thanks go to Pacifica's staff, Mark Kelly (for his patience and support), Diana Zakhour, Jason Bays, Francine Matas, Robyn Cass, Rachel Reeve, Jeannette Day, Jose Dia, Sheryl, Rudy Romero the chef, and to my class

mates, Kika, Yolanda, Patricia (Viva Latinos!), Joe (my shadow), Greg and Matt, Fariba, Sherry, Nerina, Lynn, Kathrine, Yari, and Nicole.

I would like to acknowledge the support of my supervisors, Dr. Dodd Cohen, Dr. Yasser of the Wright Institute, Dr. Elaine Rose of Teen Line, my outside supervisors Marsha Teishman and Douglas Brayfield, as well as Astrid Swartz, Harold Young, Mr. Nick and Mary from the Maple Center. A special thanks to Dr Franood, Holakouee and my secondary editor David Kelly.

I would also like to acknowledge my therapists, Dr. Mat Silverstein, Dr. Jeff Blume, and Dr. Gooch. I am eternally indebted to Dr. Silverstein for his dedication to the field of psychotherapy. With him I have been contained and I have learned the art of containment. I also want to thank Dr. Jeff Blume for not only being a “good enough mother,” but an astonishing mother, and finally to Dr. Gooch for his innate wisdom and courage. Their compassion and empathy have been a road map for the treatment of my own clients. A special thanks goes to all my clients (teachers) who have confided in me and enriched my life throughout the years.

I would like to also thank my parents for their love, support, and patience. My mother’s love during my early years of development has sustained me throughout my literal and psychological exile. She is a source of unconditional love and the essence of all roses. My father’s zealous passion for learning and his fervent dedication to the enhancement of knowledge has been the torch that lit my soul and fueled my accomplishments. His love of justice and equality for all enabled him to change inheritance laws in Iran in favor of Persian Jewish women. In doing so he has honored his mother, my mother, and his granddaughter. Like his father Haji, he is a man of vision

and heart. Maman Feri and Baba Jack's sense of philanthropy knows no color or border. I would also like to thank my sister Rebecca, whom I mothered, adored, and cherished, until fate tore us apart. She is always in my thoughts, and I pray to see her happily married. To my brother, to whom I owe all the wonderful memories of our childhood. With him I learned the art of play and science in practice (he performed surgeries on live lizards). Without him I would never grasp the concept of sibling rivalry. My special thanks goes to my aunts, Yaffa and Efty, for their grace, innocence, and unconditional love. And thanks to my cousins, Joseph Yero, Jubin Mer, and Talia Mas my gurus, and my nephew Jackie (Jacko), the poet and soul of our family. Merci a Jonathon et Jessica, les deux nouvelles etincelles de notre famille.

I also extend my love and gratitude to the tribes of Mahgreftah, Yeroushalmi, Meraj, Kermanshashi, Nehdar, Masjedi, Hanasab, Monasebian, Barkordar, Mahfar, Zan Daii, and to all my aunts and uncles, Farok (donia) and her children Bano Sorayah, Bano Nahid, Abe, Michael, Rahmat, Eshag, Egthedar (love), Giti (light), Shanaz (heart), Mahnaz (grace), Yaffa Y (wisdom), Davood, Aziz, Marcel and Bijou kanoum, kourosh, Rachel & Rebecca T, Rahmat, Houshang & Diana, Michelle, Francois, Gorji (esheg), Said (passion), Agha Gol, Siounit, Sorayah S., J. and M., Mahin, George, Ray, Moussa, Mohtram, Rebecca, Moise, Sam, Sherry, Rachel, Rahel, Roby, Benny, Sina, kosro, Yossef, Toubah, Homa, Dr., Homa and Haleh, Dariush, Shiela, David, Debbie, Venus, Dan, Janette, Gina, Moise and Rebecca, Rodney, Uncle Joe, Shirin, Ziba, Dan, Katherine (zan amou jan), Parviz, Louise, Shalah, Sharam, Philip, Shirin, Vida, Sima, Ruben, Susan, Gentile, Alex N, Micky, Ariel, Sophia, Tamar, Yaffa, Shadys, Sarrafs and to my friends Chris Sutton, Dr. Maki, Dori (my sis), Gita, Parto, Avital, Vida, Angelo Prince,

Biels (Gwyn and Bill), Erit, Farideh, Ms Javaheri, Maria, Antonella, Fatin, Mercedeh Shariat Madari, Shokofeh Mogadam, Parvin, F. Shokouhi, Joseph K., Zohreh, Dennis, Zuzu, Parvin and Jerry, Derakshandeh and Faramarz, Vagheis, Sassan Kamali, to my Swiss friends, Mr. Gugglumeti, Mr. Chassot, Golchan, Sadigh, Somek, Simone, Lavi, Simone, Mme Dery, Banoo Edna, and all my friends from radio 670 AM.

My continual thanks goes to my two very long and loyal single friends, Vida K. and Joseph K., for their consistent love and support. They are the most dedicated parents I have encountered.

My appreciation extends to Dr. F. S., a visionary, consciousness-raiser and poet. As a miracle holder, a gracious host of my animus, and a nurturer of my feminine, his generous spirit saw me, sensed me, and acknowledged me. His miracle words are: "To panjata adami Helen to Liagat dari."

A million thanks to Snow Flake, who allowed me to be me.

To the memory of Mohtaram, who always believed in the feminine strength. I cherish her words and I applaud her courage. She had faith in me and in my abilities. Her supportive words are my guiding mantras: "Helen Jan to emrooz bedonia amadi Helen Jan, motmaen bash to va Natasha koshbact alam mishin Helen Jan." To the memory of my Angelic Ameh Farok, who breathed and lived through the patriarchy, yet remained true to her own voice. She is the *shagaigh* of the fields in spring, the fragrance of the jasmine in the gardens of Isphan, and the whiteness of snow on Alborz.

In remembrance of my ancestors, my silence companions, my grandmother Hechmat, an eagle whose wings sheltered women and orphans, Jan Jani, Zan Dai, Amoo Jan Aziz, Meir & Javaher, Mohtaram, Manzal, Haji, Roholah, Aha Jan, Amoo Jan, Aziz,

Meir and Javaher, Kashfian, and Victor Benjamin . . . this work is the continuation of their journey.

Special Thanks

To the big

stars

Natasha

&

Jackie.

And to the little

stars

Jonathan

&

Jessica.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my daughter Natasha, poetess, actress, writer, and inventor. She is the voice of the voiceless. She is the soul of Rumi, Mammy Hechmat, Jan Jani, Haji, Papa Meir and Dorothy Hect.

She is the Noor of my life, the beat of my heart and the drum of my soul. She is light, abrisham, tala, zar, esheg, the congress of all beauty, wisdom and love. She is the purity of white water lily and the gaze of moonlight. She is the gentle breeze of the Caspian sea and the golden minarets of Jerusalem.

I thank her for her tolerance, and I ask her forgiveness for being the bearer, the healer of my inner child, the orphan in me. To her I owe the world.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1. Introduction.....	1
The Call.....	1
The Dream.....	3
Purpose Statement.....	10
Chapter 2. Literature Review.....	13
Literature Relevant to the Topic.....	13
Feminine Literature on the Dismissal of the Feminine.....	18
Self Psychology and Exile.....	20
Object Relations and Exile.....	21
Relevant Historical Literature.....	22
The emergence of the hero myth.....	23
Patriarchy and the concept of duality.....	25
Monotheism and the subjugation of women.....	26
The story of Eve.....	27
Women in the image of Eve.....	28
Monotheistic religion and sexuality.....	29
The invention of Mary.....	30
Freud and the Madonna-Whore Complex.....	30
Mary as a chaste idol.....	32
Islam and the repression of women.....	34
The two aspects of the Goddess.....	34
A brief history of the subjugation of women in Iran.....	38

Summary of Literature Review.....	39
Statement of the Research Problem and Question.....	42
The research problem.....	42
The research question.....	43
Chapter 3. Methodology and Procedures.....	44
The Phenomenological Approach.....	52
Lived experience.....	52
The life world.....	54
The Interview.....	55
Research Methodology.....	56
The rule of epoche.....	57
The rule of description.....	58
The rule of horizontalization.....	59
The Participants.....	59
Participant solicitation.....	60
Selection criteria.....	61
Materials.....	61
Introductory question.....	62
Follow-up questions.....	62
Procedures.....	63
Procedure for gathering data.....	63
Procedures for analyzing data.....	64
Procedures for dealing with ethical concerns.....	65

Informed consent.....	66
Confidentiality.....	67
Beneficence.....	67
Chapter 4. Overview and Results.....	69
Overview.....	69
Portraits.....	71
Portrait 1.....	71
Portrait 2.....	76
Portrait 3.....	80
Portrait 4.....	84
Portrait 5.....	88
Portrait 6.....	94
Portrait 7.....	97
Portrait 8.....	101
Portrait 9.....	104
Composite Portrait.....	109
Chapter 5. Discussion of Implications.....	115
Clinical Implications.....	115
Limitations of the Study.....	121
Suggestions for Future Research.....	123
Psychological Reflections.....	124
Counter-transference and Depth Psychological Reflections.....	128
Camellia (Shekhinah)	129

Laleh (Demeter).....	130
Maryam (Artemis)	131
Lily (Inanna)	132
Yas (Echo)	132
Sunflower (Athena)	133
Rose (Hera)	134
Etesami (The Virgin)	135
White Water Lily (Sophia)	136
Reflections on the Nine Goddesses.....	139
Appendix A. Informed Consent for Experimental Study.....	140
Appendix B. Research Questions.....	142
Introductory Question.....	142
Follow-up Questions.....	142
Appendix C. Aspects (Themes).....	143
Aspects by Participant.....	143
Sunflower.....	143
Camellia.....	144
Yas.....	145
Maryam.....	147
Lily.....	148
Laleh.....	150
Rose.....	151
White Water Lily.....	153

Etesami..... 154

Pooneh (Composite Portrait) 155

A Summary of Aspects..... 157

Appendix D. Interviews..... 160

 Sun Flower Interview..... 160

 Camellia Interview..... 171

 Yas Interview..... 182

 Maryam Interview..... 198

 Lily Interview..... 214

 Laleh Interview..... 242

 Rose Interview..... 254

 White Water Lily Interview..... 265

 Etesami Interview..... 271

References..... 296

The style used throughout this dissertation is in accordance with the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th Edition, 2009), and *Pacifica Graduate Institute's Dissertation Handbook* (2011-2012).

Chapter 1 Introduction

The Call

Exile has been the dominant experience of my life. My exile did not begin when the Persian Revolution drove me from my native land; it began when my parents taught me how to think, how to speak, how to feel. As a child I internalized the patriarchal values of my parents, who had learned them from their parents before them. These patriarchal values and the language in which they were inscribed dealt me an invisible injury that split my soul and drove me into a kind of psychological exile from myself. A brief history of my life and the climate in which I was born and raised will illuminate my passion for the topic.

I was born in Tehran on December 5th, under the reign of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. At the time Iran was a monarchy, and the person of the Shah was ubiquitous in Persian homes. As I grew up, his picture stared at me from paintings, billboards, and even our currency, the Toman. One of the first images I encountered in my early years was the picture of the Shah hanging in the dining room of my school, while I was having my daily meals. This was my initial contact with patriarchy and the beginning of my journey into exile. God, then the Shah, then the grandfather or *bozorg famil*, the wisest, most influential person in the family, established the hierarchical power structure of family and community. Under this tyranny of men there was no room for the matriarchy to blossom or for women to have a voice of their own. The land was the land of men; the rule was the rule of men: it was called Sharia, a system of religious law taken from the Koran which subjugated women by denying them the right of divorce, by giving fathers ultimate say over whom their daughters marry, and by allowing men to take more than

one wife. Sharia also dictated that daughters obey their fathers and wives obey their husbands.

The rise of patriarchy in Iran suppressed feminine consciousness and its rich heritage, driving women into exile from the land of matriarchy. The repressive hierarchy has thrown a thick veil over the psyches of the Persian women, leaving them silenced and decapitated.

Crushed beneath the weight of this hierarchy, I led a mimetic existence without a voice, without a soul. The seeds of patriarchy were deeply sewn into my psyche, severing me from my core and leaving me a marionette at the mercy of my puppeteers. My story follows the same course as that of many Persian women who have lived as mothers, daughters, and wives under the flag of patriarchy. These women have been robbed of their identities, reduced to grains of sand and banned from the virginal soils of their feminine psyches. They have lived like soulless vagabonds, without a song of their own.

Particularly tragic is how these women are made willing participants in the oppressive system that victimized them. Mothers train their daughters to conform to the restrictive and demeaning expectations of the culture. As a result, their daughters grow up to be quiet, yielding, and subservient. Women become carriers of the poisonous patriarchal genes at the expense of their own voice and identity. The victims become jailors, persecutors, and tyrants, perpetuating the cycle of oppression throughout the centuries.

Persian women who have immigrated to the West are increasingly turning to psychotherapy in order to heal the splits within their identities and achieve wholeness.

Often Western psychotherapists have little understanding of the cultural factors that shape the psyches of Persian women. Such an understanding is necessary if depth psychotherapy is to serve as an alchemical vessel enabling Persian women to retrieve their souls and regain their voices. It is my hope that Western therapists will find useful insights for their psychotherapeutic practices in this study of how Persian women have been driven into psychological exile by the traditional patriarchy.

I was called to write on this topic. After reviewing various creative works, I came to the conclusion that my topic must emanate from the core of one of my dreams.

The Dream

I dream that I am a headless bust of Aphrodite thrown in a dumpsite. I am watching this site from the window of a castle. I walk away from the window, and I walk into a room where I see a classmate of mine, Kelly, who is holding an empty rabbit costume in her hands. In another room I see my friend Lory, who is at the threshold of a door deciding whether to stay where she was or to move to the next room where people are drinking and socializing.

In the dream I am in a castle. I believe this to be my father's castle, in which I have been all my life. According to Jean Chevalier (1997), in his book *The Dictionary of Symbols*, a castle is a safe and protected place. The headless golden bust of Aphrodite in my *dream* reflected my past experience in a patriarchal society. According to Jean Shinoda Bolen (1984) in her book *Goddess in Every Woman* Aphrodite in Greek mythology is considered to be the Goddess of love, beauty, and sexuality. As an archetype, she is the Goddess of creation and procreation, and her symbols are cooing lovebirds, doves, and passion-red pomegranates. According to the Greek poet Hesiod,

Aphrodite's birth from the sea-foam was the result of Cronus slicing off the genitals of Uranus and throwing them into the sea. From an act of violence emerged a sensual woman, Aphrodite.

I was also brought up in a violent world of patriarchy. From my infancy, the power of the animus and the gaze of Medusa cut me off from my Aphrodite's roots. My culture indoctrinated me to repress my feminine instincts, uprooting me from the virginal lands of my archetypal ancestors, the Goddesses. Just as the Jews were lost in the desert while searching for the Promised Land, I spent the first 40 years of my life lost in the lands of patriarchy, disconnected from my source, because I was repressing my instincts rather than relying upon them, I could not fully mature.

Marion Woodman (1982) argues that a woman attains maturity through her connection to her body. In ancient times, there were initiation rites, sacred rites that awakened and connected girls to their bodies and to the feminine cosmos. A woman's body as a container of fertility makes her one with her ancestral goddesses, through whom she incarnates. When I was growing up, the Judeo-Islamic rituals had replaced these sacred rituals. The restraints of my culture cut me off from my unconscious. As a little girl, I tried to find a home in my body; I wanted to participate in dance and drama, but that was behavior associated with prostitutes, not with a properly modest girl. So the patriarchal power of the animus mutilated my soul, cutting me off from my grounding in the feminine realm. I believe the image of the empty rabbit costume in my dream represented a hollowness caused by the absence of the feminine core that had been repressed by my culture. Marion Woodman illustrates this point:

One reason people are suffering today to an almost intolerable degree is that

their unmediated suffering has no conscious connection with its archetypal ground. Cut off from that ground, they feel they are alone, and their suffering becomes meaningless The suffering itself can easily become guilt-edged, self-dramatized, when we lack the god or goddess at the center. (p. 134)

My dream image of Aphrodite can be further analyzed through my personal history. I was born under the thick, black veil of Islam. I was born in a society that praised and valued Man but called Woman, *zaifeh*, the weak one. Women in general were very submissive and maternal, and they were trained to be housewives who would not voice their opinions. Women were not heard from or seen for who they were. They were unwanted commodities. Therefore, when the nurse announced to my relatives outside the delivery room that I was a girl, it was a catastrophe. The dream of my extended family for a male first-born was shattered. My father's potency was questioned; my mother's passion for my Dad was under scrutiny. After all, according to the laws of the Talmud, as interpreted by the by Persian Jews, a woman who is really in love with her husband produces boys. My mother had brought shame on herself and her family, and I was the product of that shame. For months after I was born, I was told that a relative would behead chickens and goats and would offer them to the poor. He was in denial, hoping his sacrifices would please God, who would intervene and tape a penis on me. No wonder I had penis envy and felt so powerless!

Ironically, since I had white skin and blond hair, I was not as big a liability to my parents. Although they had to prepare a dowry for me, I was a rare enough commodity to command a high price in the slave market of brides when I turned 16. I was called *blanche* (white), *Tala* (gold), *Abrisham* (silk), and *Helen* (light), for the biggest asset of a woman in Iran was her beauty. Beauty alone was not enough; I had to be pure and untouched before marriage. The females around me were masters in keeping my

sexuality repressed in order to make me suitable for marriage. Instead of nurturing my instincts, my female relatives froze me with their gaze and turned me into a statue. As pieces of perfect sculpture themselves, these women also wanted me to represent and embody sublime chastity, an idealized Madonna who would carry the honor of the family. Honor, which Persians call *namus*, is the need to protect women's chastity. I had to defend my *namus* at the cost of my life, at the cost of my individuation. In an Islamic society, women had to be veiled and kept chaste; they had to remain untouched and unseen by the eyes of *Namahram*, which is to say all men except their husbands. Girls were first the possession of their fathers, then of their husbands. So, my female relatives, including my *naneh* (house keeper), like Cinderella's stepmother, put me in a dungeon, where my Aphrodite qualities began to emerge.

As early as 6 or 7, as a young Aphrodite, I had magnetic warmth and was very sensual. I was coquettish and flirtatious and loved to wear pretty feminine clothes, my mom's perfumes, and red lipstick. I loved being the center of attention and enjoyed putting up little theatrical performances imitating Brigitte Bardot, Sharon Tate, Marilyn Monroe, and the Persian idol, Googosh.

My female relatives, being puritanical, suppressed all my sensuality and sexuality. They were strict and controlling, and they always kept an eye on every movement I made. Every feminine gesture of mine was interpreted as whorish. Other adults would comment on my unconscious sensuality; they would say things like "she will grow up to be such a little whore if you don't watch her." My parents, being so ashamed, imposed a harsh dress code, which emphasized covering up, and they worked hard to make me ashamed of my sensuality and sexuality. I had to tie up my hair in a knot so as not to

provoke the attention of a man. They also limited my activities and screened my friends. I was under house arrest, and my extended female relatives were my jailers. Jean Shinoda Bolen (1984), in the *Goddesses in Every Woman*, notes that, “like fathers, mothers too can develop a ‘jailor mentality’ toward their Aphrodite daughters” (p. 245).

I tried to be a perfect child at the expense of my own individuation. I believe that Kelly in the dream personifies my negative mother and is giving me my shell, an empty carapace. She is Lady Macbeth, a father’s daughter who is locked into a power complex betraying her divine self. Marion Woodman (1982) speaks to this phenomenon:

There can be no grace where the relationship to the self is cut off, that is, where there is no love between the human and the divine - in psychological terms, where there is no connection between the ego and the self because the ego is too frightened to receive from the unconscious. Without that communication the ego tries to set up its own Kingdom. (p. 60)

Woodman continues by adding that each successive generation of women continues to perpetuate the cycle of patriarchy. As one generation loses contact with its instincts it passes the lack to later generations, just as my grandmother did with my mother and me. Without grounding I began to flounder. I substituted food for motherly love.

My leaving Kelly in the dream reminds me of my rebellious adolescent years. Marion Goodman argues that when some girls think they are rebelling, all their tantrums are really nothing but a sign of collapse and defeat. I experienced this at puberty, when I wanted to blossom into a woman and find my own voice. Alas, I had no role model. My mother was herself a slave child of patriarchy. She had no backbone and had remained a victim. Creating my own value system was not an option; I did not have the inner strength or a feminine container to draw from. So, I identified with the negative mother living the ideals and principles of Islam and Judaism. I fell into an unconscious cocoon

of pleasing my mother and everyone else. By losing the war of the self and subjugating myself to the collective values, I became the decapitated Aphrodite from my dream, manipulated and then thrown in the dumpsite.

At the age of 18, I had a traditional marriage. The dumpsite in my dream represents this marriage, with Aphrodite abandoned in the refuse. As Harding (1990) said, “the custom of ‘giving away’ the bride recalls the same underlying psychological concept, namely that a woman is not her own mistress but the property of her father, who transfers her as property to her husband” (p. 103).

In the final stage of the dream, *Lory is standing at the threshold of Kelly’s room at a banquet hall where there is a celebration. Lory joins the party; she fits right in and is very jubilant.* I believe Lory represents the virgin in me, who wants to blossom so she can find the sacred home. In her book *The Pregnant Virgin*, the Jungian analyst Marion Woodman (1985) defines a virgin as a woman who has shattered the cocoons of her conventional masks. She has touched her feminine core and is walking in the realm of the soul. Such a being, according to Woodman, is like a butterfly who has discovered her essence and is comfortable with her Being. Woodman claims that she “has the courage to be and the flexibility to always becoming” (p. 78). A virgin is a woman who refuses to live behind the masks of patriarchy. She is no longer in the male territory. She blossoms into her being, develops her own language and her own voice. As Woodman eloquently describes:

The woman who is in touch with her inner virgin has passed the frontier of the anima woman operating out of a male psychology. She finds herself saying things she never said before, verbalizing questions she never asked before. She tries to speak from her feminine reality while at the same time aware of the masculine standpoint. (p. 51)

A virgin is a woman who has honored herself and has individuated. She has left her father's home in order to find her own home. She is no longer housebound, nor is she in a psychological prison. Woodman (1985) poetically compares the transformation of such a woman and her connection to her feminine instincts as “a caterpillar was sexless, almost sightless and landlocked; a butterfly laid eggs, could see and fly” (p. 13).

In order to honor myself and become a virgin I need to leave my parents' home; I must go away from the guilt and the martyr role that patriarchy has so skillfully imposed on me. By integrating the sexual, sensual roots with the emotional, spiritual, divine realm of my self, I can experience wholeness.

It is interesting to observe further how my feminine archetype is split by a madonna-whore complex. In the dream, Kelly is the perfect Edwardian mother and Lory is the whore, or the black Madonna. In Iran as well as in Edwardian societies the black Madonna, the dark side of the feminine, has always been present, but in cache. In Edwardian society the black Madonna was the mistress. Woodman relates, “in more puritan societies she was the slut, the delicacy on the side, the bunny plaything” (p. 119).

From an object-relation point of view, Kelly and Lory represent the split parts of me that I have internalized. Kelly is the perfect model of a chaste, subservient mother, who is cut off from her sensual roots, and Lory is the coquettish vixen who is locked in the dungeon. Marion Woodman (1982) illuminates this:

Many of my generation were raised by Edwardian mothers in whom the feminine archetype was split. Consciously the woman attempted to live out the so-called Madonna role—perfect mother, loving, compassionate, dutiful and chaste. Unconsciously she carried the so-called whore in her body, with the result that her feminine ego was cut off from her feminine body. (p. 119)

By walking in the realm of the black Madonna and crossing the threshold in my dream, I am shedding my puritan skin so I can recognize and honor my repressed shadow, the black Madonna. The dream leads me in that direction. Can I become a virgin? Or am I to remain the decapitated bust of Aphrodite, helpless and useless? Veronica Goodchild (2001) claims that the way to honor the self, to become the virgin, an emancipated, free woman requires the betrayal of self. She states we need to leave our provisional lives and walk in the murky waters of the soul. Goodchild adds that:

Until we become traitors to the self that we know, until we are betrayed by all that is familiar, we do not come across this destiny of ours, this orphan nature that has no authority outside itself to depend on and yet is held by the forces of Heaven and Earth. All good therapy brings us to this moment of betrayal. (p. 63)

As women living and breathing the under the patriarchal structure this is our salvation, my salvation, and the only way I could live an authentic life.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to investigate how the traditional patriarchy has driven Persian women into psychological exile. This metaphor encompasses all the ways patriarchy has misshaped and damaged these women, hiding them behind masks, robbing them of their natural language and splitting their souls from the feminine. In an effort to focus on how this psychological exile is experienced by its victims, a phenomenological method will be adopted: Persian women will be interviewed; their symptoms and dreams will be analyzed, but the women's interviews will not be chopped up into themes and processed as data in a slavish attempt to imitate the scientific method, an attempt that seems misguided and doomed to failure; instead, a phenomenological method will be employed, following the "Portrait Analysis" model of Robert Romanyshyn. The interviews with these Persian women will be recorded and

revised through a kind of artistic collaboration between interviewer and interviewee, which attempts to create a faithful recording of psychological experience. This “portrait” can then be treated as a text suitable for analysis from a depth psychological perspective.

This collaborative and affirming process of self-expression is expected to benefit women deprived of their voices for so long. Even more significantly, the elucidation of how these women experience hierarchy’s damaging and distorting effects will have many implications for therapists treating members of the Persian community. This study will ideally lead to suggestions about how therapy can help these women drop their masks, recover their voices, and return from exile. Also, this study will help the community of therapists working with Persian women to become more aware of the divisions within the psyche of their clients. It is important first and foremost to understand these divisions, to honor them, and, finally, to try integrating them into a totality, a self. This qualitative research focuses on the universal themes of the split between the feminine—associated with body and physical matter—and the masculine—associated with mind and spiritual substance. The study will explore the historical roots of this division and how it has left its traces on the psyche of Persian women. Throughout history this division has categorized women as an inferior substance to men.

This qualitative research project will empower Persian women to share their experience of exile as candidly and honestly as possible. Participation in this research is voluntary, and participants are allowed to withdraw from the research if they choose to do so. The Persian women will receive open-ended questions, which do not attempt to impose constraints on their thought, so they can express themselves without fear of censure, enabling them to create their own language and recover the voices that have

been taken away from them for so many centuries. The free association allowed by these interviews will lead to a heuristic exploration of new psychological landscapes in which these women have never adventured before. The freedom of this exercise will ideally allow them to access the dormant parts of their selves, expanding their psyches. A primary goal of this study is that the psychological landscape of Persian women will become clearer through the images, metaphors, and dreams that emerge in the interviews.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Literature Relevant to the Topic

The concept of the exile of the soul and its return is developed by Robert Romanyshyn (2004) in his work, *Anyway why did it have to be the death of the poet? The Orphic Roots of Jung's Psychology*. He explores the theme of exile and return by demonstrating the archetypal affinity that exists between Freud's hysteric and the poet Plato, who was banned from the Polis. Romanyshyn points out that the Freud's hysteric and Plato's poet are both enslaved to the collective values of society at the expense of their own values. The journey—enforced by exile—is transformative for both the hysteric and the poet. Just as the painful journey of the poet's exile from the polis empowers him to become a poet of anamnesis capable of expressing his own values, instead of a poet of mimesis capable only of reflecting the values of his society, so the painful journey of self-exploration in the therapy room empowers the hysteric to become a healthy person. The hysteric's symptoms arise not only from the negative repression of the soul by mimetic values, as Freud would have us believe, but also from a positive longing for anamnesis, which, for Romanyshyn, is a return from forgetting and a "re-remembering of the flesh," meaning a re-remembering of the soul. Romanyshyn argues that Orpheus is such a poet; that Orpheus, by turning back during his return to the surface, remembers his soul and connects to his inner song, thereby enabling him to channel the music of creation more intimately. Romanyshyn argues that "Orpheus's song is cathartic, it frees the soul from its enslavement to melodies that are not its own" (p. 67). As such, Orpheus becomes the poet of anamnesis and sings his own song. Romanyshyn argues, "For Plato the tale of exile and return was rooted in his desire to transform the education

of the Greek soul from mimesis to anamnesis, a shift that would free the soul from its condition of exile and ignorance” (p. 56). Whereas Plato advocates transforming Greek souls through education in the polis, depth psychology advocates transforming patients’ souls through an almost Socratic dialectic in the polis-like microcosm of the therapy room. For both Plato and the theorists of depth psychology, the most individuated among us are still singing songs alien to our souls, which are foisted upon us by others in our family or culture.

Though this is true even for a privileged male brought up in Western society, who has been encouraged to express his own thoughts, seek his own happiness, and pursue his own dreams, how much more true it is for a Persian woman trained from childhood to be silent and to submit to the oppressive ideology of her culture’s patriarchy. Because of her cultural training, this Persian woman leads an almost fully mimetic life, and the lack of anamnesis causes the majority of the symptoms that bring her to therapy. Romanyshyn’s analysis of the Orphic myth of individuation is particularly applicable to such a Persian woman, who has so much hunger for a true re-membering and so little ability to achieve it on her own.

For Romanyshyn, a benevolent culture exiles us in order to initiate a process of individuation, allowing us to become full citizens only when we have become fully ourselves; however, for Veronica Goodchild, we must actively betray our culture, making ourselves orphans in order to begin the process of individuation. Goodchild believes that the alchemical process of making ourselves orphans is a kind of self-imposed exile and return. This journey leads from chaos, *massa confusa*, to a condition of health and integration. In her book, *Eros and Chaos*, Goodchild (2001) argues that in order to

undergo this transformative journey, one has to become an orphan. Goodchild's idea of becoming an orphan is similar to Romanyshyn's idea of crossing the threshold from mimesis to anamnesis. The orphan, like Orpheus, turns her back on all that is familiar and on all that is imposed on her by the collective values. By turning her back, the orphan divests herself of her historical, chronological, and cultural origins. She becomes homeless and isolated; she longs to be reborn. By gazing back, the orphan, like Orpheus, enters the realm of the soul, fulfills her destiny, finds her vocation, sings her own song, and becomes divine. Goodchild claims that the best way to honor the self is to betray the self; only by such a betrayal can a Persian woman become the virgin, emancipated and free. Goodchild argues that we need to leave our provisional lives and walk in the murky waters of the soul. She states:

Until we become traitors to the self that we know, until we are betrayed by all that is familiar, we do not come across this destiny of ours, this orphan nature that has no authority outside itself to depend on and yet is held by the forces of Heaven and Earth. All good therapy brings us to this moment of betrayal. (p. 63)

Goodchild's view on exile is particularly useful, because the Persian patriarchy is not a benevolent society excluding the poet-individual in order that she might return more fully herself; instead, the culture encourages, even seduces, women into continuing to live their mimetic lives. Exile, for the Persian woman, must be self-initiated. She must orphan herself; she must actively betray the culture and all its values along with all that is familiar in order to secure her own salvation.

Goodchild's description of self-orphaning and Romanyshyn's description of transforming into an anamnestic poet represent further developments of Carl Jung's idea of individuation through the integration of the masculine and feminine aspects of the soul. For Jung, Westerners are out of touch with the anima, a state of being that is

analogical to psychological exile. In order to return from exile successfully individuated, men and women must integrate the feminine and the masculine. Jung argues that in order for a woman to create an independent identity or self, she must reside in the rich, archetypal, and virginal soil of the feminine psyche, the home of the soul. Jung asserts that the worship of the feminine strengthens the souls of men and women and gets both in touch with their instincts. To illustrate this point, Jung (1971/1982) references Dante's *Divine Comedy*:

Dante is the spiritual knight of his lady; for her sake he embarks on the adventure of the lower and upper worlds. In the mystical figure of Mother of God the figure that has detached itself from the object and become the personification of a purely psychological factor, or rather, of those unconscious contents whose personification I have termed the anima. (p. 5)

By this reference to *The Divine Comedy*, Jung emphasizes the importance of the anima in the psychological landscape of both men and women. The descent to the lower world allegorizes the connection of man to the contents of his unconscious. The connection gives the anima shape, form, and voice, and then brings it to life, personifying it as the Mother of God. Personifying as soul making is a way of touching one's dynastic nature or authentic core. It is awakening other dimensions of a human being.

In Persian society the anima is crushed and buried. For Persian women the house of psyche is filled with patriarchal voices and images that determine their destinies. These masculine occupants of a woman's psyche have deprived her of the opportunity to find her own voice. In exile her voice is the voice of her patriarchs, and she has internalized these voices to her own detriment. Women see their own identities only through the eyes of men. The subjugation of the anima thwarts the dynastic nature of

women, preventing the archetypal feminine from occupying her rightful place in the house of psyche.

In order to create a psychic equilibrium, men and women need to honor their animas through redemption. Jung (1971/1982) argues in his book, *Aspects of the Feminine*, that in patriarchal Christian society (where every man wanted to establish his own laws) it was crucial for man to release himself from all his erotic wishes, intentions, and fantasies. Man had to free himself from the spell of anima, from bondage to the sensual, and from the state of primitive participation mystique. This exile and the rupture of man from his anima would, according to Jung, fulfill his spiritual function and restore him to a psychic equilibrium governed by reason and rationalism. In *Aspects of the Feminine* Jung states that the loss of soul leaves man hollow, sick, and dead. Jung remarks:

Loss of soul amounts to a tearing loose of part of one's nature; it is the disappearance and emancipation of a complex, which thereupon becomes a tyrannical usurper of consciousness, oppression the whole man. It throws him off course and drives him to actions whose blind one-sidedness inevitably leads to self-destruction. Primitives are notoriously subject to such phenomena as running amok, going berserk, possession, and the like. (p. 10)

The phenomenon of one-sidedness is apparent in Persian women. Due to years of subjugation by men, Persian women have become the obedient girls, wives, and mothers of their husbands' desire. They have to carry the burden of chastity and purity throughout their lives. The one-dimensionality of their character and the disconnection from the rich collective and personal anima leave them empty and void. Oppression throws some in the abyss of depression, insanity, superstition, and loneliness.

Feminine Literature on the Dismissal of the Feminine

Jung's idea of exile, as repression of the anima, is expanded upon by Marion Woodman, who argues that exile is the act of being severed from the virginal lands of one's archetypal ancestors: the Goddesses. For Woodman, women's psychological suffering arises from lack of connection to the archetypal ground. Woodman (1982) illustrates this point by stating:

One reason people are suffering today to an almost intolerable degree is that their unmediated suffering has no conscious connection with its archetypal ground. Cut off from that ground they feel they are alone, and their suffering becomes meaningless The suffering itself can easily become guilt-edged, self-dramatized, when we lack the god or goddess at the center. (p. 134)

Woodman goes on to argue that each successive generation of women continues to perpetuate the value of patriarchy, which further throws women into a psychological abyss where they are cut off from their feminine roots. Woodman's ideas are useful for explaining the cyclical process whereby Persian women collaborate in driving their own daughters into exile generation after generation. As the women of one generation lose contact with their instincts, they pass on the condition of exile to the next generation. Persian women pass on the patriarchal ideologies of subservience to their daughters, reducing their voices and distorting their perception of reality. Marion Woodman argues that women can only break this cycle and attain maturity by getting in touch with their bodies.

In *The Descent to the Goddess*, Sylvia Brinton Perera (1981) explains that in order for women to redeem themselves from being "daughters of their fathers" and to confront the archetypal patriarchal shadow, they need to sacrifice their old patterns of dependency and find their true home in the virginal land of the feminine by making a

descent into the underworld. Perera relates the myth of Inanna's descent, which allows Inanna to realize the limits of patriarchy and helps her recognize how patriarchy has repressed her true self. The de-potentialization of patriarchy and its animus ideals allows Inanna to break away from an ingrained old identity that has given her meaning. This initiation requires Inanna to return to the dark, to find her sister, Ereshkigal, and to regain her potency. Perera defines return from exile as finding renewal through connection with Inanna's complement, Ereshkigal. Together, the two goddesses make a bipolar wholeness that is a pattern of the archetypal feminine. The reborn self, which, like the moon, is dark as well as light, fertile as well as destructive, can be considered a child born from the union of opposite parts of the psyche, the feminine principle or Eros and the masculine principle or Logos. No such "hero child" can become incarnate without a marriage of both the male and female parts of the psyche. Jung calls the self that emerges from this union or transformation the "nonpersonal, nonego" self, its qualities partaking of the divine. Individuals who arise from this transformation never bend their heads to any one. They are totally free and self-sufficient. They are no longer under the tyranny of either their old self or anyone else; they are renewed and reborn.

In the words of Esther Harding (1990), the self that emerges is "immovable, it is homeless, that is to say it is not dependent on being established or conditioned, and its strength is in itself" (p. 231). Persian women's salvation is to break away from the established rules of patriarchy in order to find their own voice and their own strength.

In *Woman's Mysteries*, Esther Harding (1990) argues that in order to become whole, one needs to take a voyage in the Crescent Moon Boat. She relates the myth of the moon thus: when the moon covers the earth with a deluge, it provides a boat in the

shape of an arc, which carries the chosen people to a new world. Harding explains “salvation is to be found by a new attitude towards the power of instinct, involving the recognition that it is, in itself, not human, but belongs to the nonhuman or divine realm” (p. 124). In other words, one needs to connect to one’s instinct to reach divinity.

Self Psychology and Exile

Exile is also an important theme in the theories of clinical psychologists such as Heinz Kohut. He stresses the importance of interpersonal relationships in building a cohesive self, especially between mother and child during development. Kohut (2009) in *The Analysis of Self*, argues that children must idealize their mother and must be mirrored by them in order to develop a proper sense of self-worth and wholeness. Their responses and displays of exhibitionism must be validated by “the gleam of the mother’s eyes” (p. 74). Kohut further states that if there is an empathic failure from the mother, the child desperately tries to be perfect and “performs” in order to bask in the gleam of the mother’s eyes. As a result, the child’s sense of self fragments, and the child develops a false self. Persian women lack the proper mirroring; under the gleam of patriarchal eyes they are molded into what patriarchy wants them to be, and they become performers severed from their true selves.

In *The Analysis of Self*, the second tenet of Kohut’s (2009) theory is that the child needs to perceive the parent as omnipotent in order for the parent’s presence to heal and soothe the child’s soul. A healthy child needs to internalize the idealized parent’s image in order to build a solid internal infrastructure, a cohesive self. The failure of this process leads to a kind of exile, which Kohut calls the fragmentation of the self. Kohut’s theories provide a framework for explaining the developmental mechanism whereby patriarchy

brings about the fragmentation of Persian women's psyches. Persian women are in a quandary. They must either idealize the omnipotent, tyrannical father or the weak, subservient mother. In either case they cut themselves off from their feminine core and fail to build a solid self.

Object Relations and Exile

The argument that parental failure drives a child into a kind of psychological exile is also seen in the work of other clinical theorists, such as the British object relation theorists, D. W. Winnicott and Michael Balint. Winnicott (1965) argues that children need a "good-enough mother," who provides a suitably loving environment for the development of the child's true self. The psychological health of the grown adult is contingent on the responses of the mother and other caregivers during childhood. Throughout their careers, both Winnicott and Balint used the expression "basic fault" to describe the feeling that something is missing in a patient. They remark that the deficit in the self is caused by the neglect of the child's basic needs by the mother. Therefore a child who is not seen, not touched, not mirrored adequately does not develop the feminine, the creative, playful, and instinctual part of the psyche. In a way, that part of the child remains in exile.

Persian mothers raised under patriarchy lack the mirroring and attention that are required for the development of a healthy self. Not having experienced it themselves, Persian mothers cannot create a nurturing environment for their children. A girl raised under patriarchy is like Cinderella left alone in the basement. Many Persian women do not remember experiencing a soothing word or a soothing gaze from their mothers. This is the myth of Persian women who remain in exile, severed from their feminine cores.

Relevant Historical Literature

The exile of the feminine under patriarchy is a cultural and historical phenomenon explored by Ann Baring and Jules Cashford (1991) in their masterpiece, *The Myth of the Goddess*. Baring argues that, before the rise of patriarchy, for 25 thousand years, the Mother Goddess played a central role in human culture. In the Paleolithic era and the Neolithic, she was perceived as the transformer, giver, and taker of life. As the creator of everything, her influence extended over the cycles of nature, such as the waxing and waning of the moon. Like the moon, the Mother Goddess was seen as a container of light and dark as well as their metaphorical analogues, life and death, which were understood not as opposites, but as natural progressions of each other. The image of the Goddess or Great Mother was the symbol evoking the unity of the universe between mother, earth, and heaven. Women were seen as the symbol of creation and unity, and their temples were the central focus of the community.

Clearly, the miracles of creation were associated with the image of the Great Mother. Yet a fascinating association has been found in myth between the moon, as the whole of nature, and the Mother Goddess. In myth, the phases of the moon waxing, waning, and waxing again are compared to birth, decay, and renewal of human life. For people living under a matriarchy, the cyclical rhythms of the moon were seen as similar to human life. The waxing of the moon represented the birth of the Goddess or a new beginning, and the waning of the moon represented the death or the departure of the Goddess. The growing darkness of the waning moon, like the dark womb, was a period of waiting and gestation for new life to be born. The circular pattern of birth, death, and renewal with the appearance of the crescent moon shed the trust of life in men's heart. In

the Paleolithic era, tribes associated the moon and her cycles and the whole of nature to the mother Goddess. As Baring and Cashford (1991) state, in the Paleolithic era

darkness was not something antagonistic to light, nor death to life, but an aspect of the being of the Mother Goddess. Everything that existed, including themselves, was an expression of the Goddess. Everything, therefore, was an image that confirmed their relationship to her. Out of this ability to experience life imaginably arose the inexhaustible creativity of humanity. (p. 19)

According to Baring and Cashford, matter and spirit were intertwined; this synthesis of the above and the below was reflected throughout primitive arts and sciences.

The emergence of the hero myth.

During the Bronze Age the power of the Goddess began to diminish as her temples were invaded by warrior tribesmen, who imposed their patriarchal values on the people. Individualism and individual rule rose at the expense of collectivism and collective rule. The hero separated himself from the tribe, and his image became that of a savior. From this shift emerged the hero myth, based on the paradigm of opposition and conquest rather than unity. The hero was idealized. The myth of the hero, as the warrior, savior, and protector, began to take shape. The hero myth is reflected in the Old Testament. There, Moses, as a male savior-protector with his faith in a masculine monotheistic deity, was single-handedly able to save the Israelites with his power. Moses as a symbol exercises a strong influence, shifting the power in favor of men. The image of a masculine God in the sky replaced the image of the Goddess in the earth as the creator of all. The Mother Goddess receded into the background, and the Father God emerged as the central focus of creation. Nancy Quall-Corbett, the author of *The Sacred Prostitute* (1988), argues that one reason this shift occurred was that man recognized and overestimated his share in procreation. He perceived himself as the sole creator of new

life and lineage. Woman was just the container of his creation. With this belief, man was able to establish himself as an omnipresent figure, create his own laws, and subjugate women.

Richard Roberts (1985), in his book *From Eden to Eros*, gives a historical account of the waning of matriarchy and the emergence of patriarchy. Roberts states that the center of civilization between 3600-2400 BC was in Sumer; its status as the center of civilization began to diminish as power shifted south to Egypt and then to Crete. Before 1200 BC, the dominance of matriarchy was evident in the statues and the artwork of the period. By the end of the Bronze Age, and the beginning of the Iron Age, matriarchy began its descent. Joseph Campbell (1983), in his book *The Way of the Animal Powers*, talks about this crucial part of history; he states that goddess culture was radically suppressed due to invasions by the Aryans and the Semitic tribes. Campbell details how from 1200 BC, with the development of armor, swords, and spears, militant patriarchy began to conquer Mother earth. Campbell claims that nomadic cattle herders from the north, as well as sheep and goat herders from the south, attacked and plundered the cult and heritage of matriarchy, which was based on a non-heroic, natural, and organic view of nature and life. As a result of this change from matriarchy to patriarchy, humankind was faced with a profound psychological and cultural shift.

Patriarchy and the concept of duality.

Patriarchy introduced the concept of duality. There was suddenly a separation between pairs of opposites: good and evil, light and dark, life and death, and humanity and nature. In the tradition of the Goddesses, the tree of life encompassed all pairs of opposites. Suddenly, with the advent of patriarchal religion, Eve was considered evil; she was cut off from the tree of life, which encompassed both good and evil. Death was regarded as the absolute and horrifying end to life. Darkness was the end of light and represented death. Life came to be seen as linear rather than circular. Suddenly, the heroes were mystified and glorified. This was the generation that first glorified the animus, the phallus, and the invasion of the feminine.

Lionel Corbett (n.d.) argues that social stratification arose from factors such as the immigration from villages to cities, the emergence of trade, the rise of militarism, and the alteration of boundaries due to the expansion or reduction of territories. Corbett argues that every culture honored its own divinities and its way of worship. The fear of these civilizations was that, in the clash of cultures, their gods would be dismissed. According to Corbett, the idea of one, omnipotent, supreme God was invented in order to preemptively trump any such dismissal. Elites in the newly patriarchal societies chose to make their supreme God masculine in their own image (p. 42). Men further enforced their position by eradicating the cult of the Goddess, destroying her temples and establishing the house of the Lord. To further solidify the position of the male, monotheistic God, Christianity developed the idea of the Trinity, according to which the father, the son, and the Holy Spirit were worshiped. Suddenly, man embodied everything that is good. Monotheism rejected darkness and death. In *Uncursing of the Dark: Restoring the Lost Feminine*, Betty De Shong Meador states (1992) that:

Our own American culture, built on Judeo-Christian monotheism, carries a strong bias against the dark; against chaos, the dark side of order; against the cyclic which includes waxing and waning; against the feminine as it is related to the dark; and ultimately against containing of opposites in favor of the light only. I want to examine this bias, which I see as an archetypal perception, galvanized into a religion, and filtered into our bones as truth. (p. 118)

The feminine as the carrier of both light and dark had to be annihilated for man to justify his position as a container of all that is light. In the Judeo-Christian world, the masculine person or God became the image of perfection. For Meador, this truth infiltrated the soul of men and remained their truth for centuries. Thomas Aquinas, echoing Paul, justifies the superiority of man over woman by stating that man is the image of God. In *the Myth of the Goddess* Anne Baring and Jules Cashford (1991) quote Thomas Aquinas:

For man is the beginning and end of woman; as God is the beginning and end of every creature. From which, on an assumption of God as Supreme Reason, it follows that: By a kind subjection woman is naturally subject to man, because in man the discretion of reason predominate. (p. 519)

This monotheistic view defines a woman as a light-headed creature who needs to be directed by man.

Monotheism and the subjugation of women.

Monotheism gave man a good reason to subjugate women. Women were seen as incapable creatures that needed to be dominated and controlled. This pattern of thinking by which women were seen as inferiors due to their lack of wisdom, or even reason, trickled down from Judaism to Islam. In most monotheistic religions, man is associated with reason, wisdom, and spirit. According to the patriarchs and the religious leaders, these attributes allow man to fight against his feminine side in order to release himself from his darker instincts and erotic fantasies. In Jungian terms, Man and God denied,

repressed, and split their shadow, rendering it unconscious. Man had to create a scapegoat for his shadow. He found Eve.

The story of Eve.

The exile of the feminine has strong biblical roots and is manifested in the story of Eve. As a symbol of the Mother Goddess, Eve is replaced by Yahweh, the masculine God. In the Hebrew mythology Yahweh, as the Great Father, was the creator of heaven and earth. The Great Mother is no longer the vessel that holds together the two polarities of life and death. Instead, she brings destruction to the world because she disobeys God by listening to the snake and eating from the forbidden fruit. Eve is portrayed as inferior to man—irrational, gullible, and morally weak—because she succumbs to her vices and destroys the kingdom of heaven. The bible splits the roles, giving Yahweh the role of the creator and Eve the role of the destroyer.

Anne Baring and Jules Cashford (1991) argue that Judeo-Christianity, by having Eve charm Adam into disobeying God, characterizes Eve as the ultimate seductress. Eve, as a manifestation of the Goddess, is portrayed from the beginning as a sinner who lures Adam into sinning through her dangerously corruptive sexuality. She is a curse to the world and a symbol of human affliction and immorality. So, right from the start, monotheistic religion—Christianity, Judaism, and Islam collectively—split matter and spirit into opposite poles: Adam is spirit, and Eve matter. Eve was identified with the serpent as evil and as an instinctual sexual being.

By allowing herself to obey her instincts, Eve loses her divine values and brings destruction to the world. Eve's tale dramatizes the necessity of disciplining (even subjugating) feminine sexuality, lest it tempt and corrupt otherwise pure men. Women,

as seducers descended from Eve, had to be subjugated in order to reduce their corruptive influence.

Women in the image of Eve.

In Jewish literature, apocryphal sources present women as weak creatures who use their charms in order to trap men. As evil charmers, women were forced to dress modestly and cover their hair. In the Persian Jewish community, women had to protect their honor (or *namus*) and that of their family by being properly dressed (meaning covered) and abstaining from any act of coquettishness. Persian women who refused to obey these laws lost their respect in the community and brought shame to themselves and their families. Usually, these women were excluded from society and were unable to find someone suitable to marry. H. F. D. Sparks (1984), in *The Apocryphal New Testament*, describes women as evil beings who need to be restrained from adorning themselves, lest they corrupt and tempt men. According to *The Apocryphal New Testament* sources, women are vilified:

Women are evil, my children: because they have no power or strength to stand up against man, they use wiles and try to ensnare him by their charms; and man, whom woman cannot subdue by strength, she subdues by guile. For, indeed, the angel of God told me about them and taught me that women yield to the spirit of fornication more easily than a man does, and they lay plots in their hearts against men: by the way they adorn themselves they first lead their minds astray, and by a look they instill the poison, and then in the act itself they take them captive—for a woman cannot overcome a man by force. So shun fornication, my children, and command your wives and daughters to adorn their heads and faces, for every woman that uses wiles of this kind has been reserved for eternal punishment. (p. 519)

Women were to be covered, shamed, and shunned from society because their sexual

natures made them dangerous and evil. Women's sexual nature became a pretense for their subjugation. The schism between man and woman was further expanded by the Levites. Their laws crushed the image of the Goddess and her customs. The cults of the Priestess in their temples were abolished. The practice of having intercourse with the temple priestesses and caring for their children was banned. The status of priestesses as major public figures, enjoying political and financial power, was compromised. It seemed that in early Sumeria, Egypt, Crete, and Canaan, women owned property and conducted their own commercial affairs. Laws protected their property rights. Women enjoyed inheritance rights equal to those of men. With the rise of patriarchy, the position of female deities deteriorated, and so did the rights of women. They lost their equal rights to own and inherit property. Among Semitic tribes, women became the chattel of men, with neither voice nor rights. They could be sold in the market as slaves. Man claimed the power of life and death over women. Newly born boys were revered and were "hailed as a blessing," whereas newly born girls were considered a disaster and sometimes even buried alive.

Monotheistic religion and sexuality.

Monotheistic religion condemned sexuality. Men had to rein in women's sexuality and make them pure, in order to have children from a pure source. Because man was the image of the divine, he and his heirs had to be conceived from an unadulterated womb. How could man redeem woman and keep his image of divinity intact? Man needed to purify woman in order to keep his own image intact. Jesus, as a symbol of Christian divinity, was conceived from the clean womb of Mary. Jesus was too pure to come out of a contaminated womb.

The invention of Mary.

In a way, Christianity was redeeming Eve by inventing Mary as an idol of chastity. Mary was associated with images such as the enclosed garden, the sealed fountain, and the bridal chamber. St. Augustine's *De institutione Virginis* (as cited in Jung, 1971/1982) describes Mary as a pure vessel: "He chose for himself a chaste bridal chamber, where the bridegroom was joined to the bride," and "He issued forth from the bridal chamber that is from the virginal womb" (p. 16). St. Ambrose, in *De institutione Virginis* (as cited in Jung, 1971/1982), also emphasizes Mary's virginal aspects: "In the womb of the virgin, grace increased like a heap of wheat and the flowers of the lily, even as it generated the grain of wheat and the lily" (p. 17). Mary was the image of the "vessel of devotion," the biblical origin of vessel symbolism. St. Ambrose confirms St. Augustine's ideas about the purity of the virgin's womb in *De institutione Virginis* (as cited in Jung, 1971/1982): "not of earth but of heaven did he choose for himself this vessel, through which he should descend to sanctify the temple of shame" (p. 17). Mary, as a vessel of renewal and devotion, was to redeem Eve and all the shame associated with her. She does not partake of the earthly, erotic feelings associated with pagan goddesses and their temples. Eve was all instinctual, whereas Mary was all divine. There seems to be a certain affinity between this split view of woman in Christianity and the concept of the madonna-whore complex created by Freud.

Freud and the madonna-whore complex.

Freud developed the idea of the madonna-whore complex, according to which women are split into two halves, a good and a bad object. In *A Special Type of Choice Object Made by Men*, Freud (1957/1910) developed the idea of the madonna-whore

complex or the mother-prostitute complex. Freud realized that certain of his male patients were incapable of having intimate relationships with their wives. According to Freud, these men were raised by cold and inattentive mothers. Freud claimed that these men fell in love with women who resembled their mothers in the hope of fulfilling the need for love that was not met in childhood. Perceiving their wives as mother figures, or Madonnas, these men were incapable of having sexual or intimate relationships with them. These men had difficulty integrating both sex and love, because love with their wives was, in their minds, incestuous. These men reserved sex for women whom they perceived to be whorish in nature. This Freudian concept, and the split of women into beings who were either sexual and evil or pure and good, is highly relevant in the patriarchal Persian culture. Persian men want their children to be conceived from a chaste womb, and want their wives to be the image of Mary.

The madonna-whore complex is not limited to Christian society; on the contrary, it is a common phenomenon in the Jewish and Muslim communities of Iran. Purity is a paramount virtue for women in the Persian world, and purity means virginity and selflessness. A desirable woman for marriage is one who is pure, a virgin with no history of intimacy who can serve obediently as mother and wife. In Iran, women should have two qualities: they should be *lavand* in private but be *kanoum* in public. *Kanoum* means lady-like, restrained in behavior, and not given to coquettish movements. Such a woman must speak with a low voice and must not make eye contact with men. Her very subservience makes her marriage material. If, on the contrary, a woman states her opinion, has a strong voice and asserts her sexuality, she is immediately labeled as a

whore. The binary role created by Islam has left an immense split on the psyche of men. A good woman has the qualities of Mary; she remains as pure as possible.

Mary as a chaste idol.

Jung argues that to keep his laws intact, man had to create Mary as a chaste idol in order to protect himself from falling under the spell of woman. The worship of Mary as a divine figure served as a self-regulating mechanism with which man could rein in his instincts. Man could no longer be a victim of his dynastic nature; the story of Adam could not be repeated. According to Jung (1971/1982), the figure of Mary guarded against man's loss of psychic equilibrium:

For in the face of the overwhelming might of passion, which puts one human being wholly at the mercy of another, the psyche succeeds in building up a counter position so that, at the height of passion, the boundlessly desired object is unveiled as an idol and man is forced to his knees before the divine image, then the psyche has delivered him from the curse of the object's spell. He is restored to himself again and, flung back on himself, finds himself once more between gods and men, following his own path and subject to his own laws. (p. 10)

Because men possessed a quality that they perceived as making them feeble in the presence of women's sexuality, they had to create a chaste and divine being as an idol, to prevent them from bending to the will and desires of women. Because men could not tame their own dynastic nature or channel it, they projected their own weakness onto women, accusing women of being weak and evil. By idolizing Mary, man dissected a part of himself: his soul. In turning against woman, man turned against himself.

For Jung, the transference of libido to a subject like Mary creates powerful images in the unconscious. These images become symbols engraved in the psyche. The new symbol of woman as both mother and desirable maiden replaced the archaic symbol of the mistress in the collective unconscious of men. The erotic element in a man recedes

into the background. His erotic fantasies no longer involve a lusty mistress of flesh and blood; instead, they are fixated on a chaste figure that descends from heaven. The religious imprints on the psyche of man deprived his soul of personal expression. Jung (1971/1982) remarks:

The assimilation of these elements to the Christian symbol nipped in the bud the psychic culture of the man; for his world, previously reflected in the image of the chosen mistress, lost its individual form of expression through this absorption. Consequently, any possibility of an individual differentiation of the soul was lost when it became repressed in the collective worship. Such losses generally have unfortunate consequences, and in this case they soon made themselves felt. Since the psychic relation to woman was expressed in the collective worship of Mary, the image of woman lost a value to which human beings had a natural right. This value could find its natural expression only through individual choice, and it sank into the unconscious when the individual form of expression was replaced by a collective one. In the unconscious, the image of woman received an energy charge that activated the archaic and infantile dominants. And since all unconscious contents, when activated by dissociated libido, are projected upon external objects, the devaluation of the real woman was compensated by daemonic traits. She no longer appeared as an object of love, but a persecutor or witch. (p. 19)

This powerful passage by Jung demonstrates how religion changed the psychic landscape of man during the advent of Christianity, and deprived man of the freedom to have his own feelings. It also deprived man of his individuality and the expression of his soul. Man had to split woman's image, transferring all the divine attributes to Mary and all the wicked attributes to women. It distorted men's view of women, and changed the image of woman from a nurturing object to a ruining object. In the collective worship of Mary, man dissected himself from his own anima. This was the beginning of the downfall of men and civilization. Man without his soul, without his feminine nurturing side, turned into a despotic being that began devaluing woman.

Islam and the repression of women.

This tradition of turning woman into a hateful, weak object trickled all the way to Islam. The result of the repression of women has been the stunting of feminine autonomy and growth in Iran. In patriarchal Persian society, women are second-class citizens who are not trusted. Persian men confide in their families, but rarely in their wives. They also hide their assets from their spouses for fear that, if women know their real wealth, they would destroy it.

Symbolization in this case leads to the detachment of libido from its—thereby devalued—real object: women. This detachment split the object into two incomplete parts. The resulting symbolic images of chaste woman and whore are outer personifications of an inner archetypal image, which became embedded in the deep layers of the psyche. The image of the mother Goddesses receded into the unconscious and was replaced by chaste women. These developments altered the behavior of men toward women in both the west and the east. Nancy Qualls-Corbett (1988), in her book *The Sacred Prostitute: Eternal Aspect of the Feminine*, quotes Jung's *Collected Works, Volume 5* on the concept of archetype: "It may be said in the long run to mold the destinies of individuals by unconsciously influencing their thinking, feeling, and behavior, even if this influence is not recognized until long afterwards" (p. 814).

The two aspects of the goddess.

In *From Eden to Eros*, Richard Roberts (1985) details the effect of this split—characterized by him as the two aspects of the Goddess—on the collective unconscious of men. His study is relevant to Persian patriarchy because a similar split is engraved on psyche of Persian men. He states that Christianity dissected the Great mother and its

aspects of light and dark, creative and destructive; it projected the evil and the destructive onto Eve, and the creative and holy onto Mary. These dual attributes, or splits imposed by the church, were masculine projections onto the collective as well as the personal unconscious of men (his anima). According to Roberts, the archetypal feminine created ambivalence in the collective unconscious of men. Man craved woman's embrace yet he was afraid of her dangerous nature. He vacillated between the mother and the whore. Roberts explains that Christianity's projection of evil onto feminine sexuality (i.e., women had unnatural lust and could bewitch men) transformed women into temptresses and witches. The hysterical seeds of sin and devil became lodged in the minds of men, causing them to repress their Eros in order to protect themselves from the insatiable desires of women. Roberts (1985) states:

The male hysteria focused relentlessly upon the sexual nature of witchcraft, and beneath this hysteria we see clearly *masculine inadequacy before the power of feminine sexuality*, the fertile and teeming womb of the Mother Goddess; and her incarnation in her every daughter on the planet. From patriarchy's point of view, Eve was the greatest witch and evil to come into the world. So given Eve's link to the Devil, it was no great matter to project evil onto womankind collectively, retuning us once against the origins of the put down of women. (p. 72)

Fear of the feminine led men to create safe containers, to protect themselves from the vices and erotic needs of women. According to Roberts, poetic creation between the 11th and the 13th century became the container of longing and Eros. Love became spiritual; sexuality and physicality were removed from it. Poetry expressed the longing for anima and the worship of feminine within. Women were idealized, put on pedestals through poetic inspirations. Courtly love and chivalry were how men expressed their animas.

Roberts further states that during the Renaissance and the Reformation, lyric poetry praised the holiness of the Virgin. The repression of the feminine became more

severe, and bodily pleasures were ignored. The earthly, positive attitudes of the Goddess were replaced by the spiritualized aspects of the Goddess.

The abortion of the Dionysian nature of women also severed the relation of men to their anima, and cut men's connection between body and soul. The repression of the dionysic nature of man is the repression of the emotional body. The mutilation of Dionysus is the abortion of feeling and emotions in a psyche of a person (Rafael Lopez-Pedraza, 2000).

Anima in a man is his inner feminine nature or soul; it is his inner guide that leads him to his core, his self, and the center of his being. Man's anima is developed through his interaction with women, and may have many facets. If man attempts to dominate his anima and views his anima as a threat, then his relationship with the inner feminine is damaged and, as a consequence, his relationships with women suffer. As Jung (1931/1954) states:

Every man carries within him the eternal image of woman, not the image of this or that particular woman, but a definite feminine image. This image is fundamentally unconscious, a hereditary factor of primordial origin engraved in the living organic system of the man, an imprint or "archetype" of all the ancestral experiences of the female. (p. 198 [CW17, para. 338])

Men—in our case, Persian men—who have been shaped by the laws of patriarchy cannot change their narrow attitudes towards women. The neglect of the Goddess, their anima or inner core, leaves them empty, dull, and purposeless. They replace this emptiness through the exercise of power over women.

Baring and Cashford (1991) remark that monotheism further subjugated the feminine by abasing her image. According to the Old Testament, Eve was a secondary creation derived by God from Adam's rib. Anne Baring mentions that the word *woman*

in Hebrew was *ishshah*, meaning, “taken out of man.” Baring and Cashford (1991) also discuss Joseph Campbell’s contention that the biblical story of creation is contrary to the whole of nature; man gives birth instead of woman (p. 492). Because she is an extension of Adam and second to be created by God, she is less divine and therefore less valuable. Her divinity is only the reflection of Adam’s divinity. In his book *The Myth of Analysis*, James Hillman (1972) confirms the arguments of Anne Baring and Joseph Campbell that, from conception, Eve is inferior because of her birth rank and because divinity has been passed to her through Adam. Hillman argues that Adam is the only one to bear God’s image; he has a higher consciousness because Eve was conceived from him. Hillman further argues that the fourth element that makes Eve inferior to Adam is that she was extracted from Adam’s rib, from part of a whole and not the whole itself: “The existence, essence, and material substance of Eve depend on Adam. He is her formal cause, since she is made of his rib; and he is her final cause, since her end and purpose is help for him. The male is the precondition of the female and the ground of its possibility” (p. 218). God, in creating Adam and Eve, created an imbalance between man and woman, making woman dependent and the property of man because her true essence is that of men and not herself.

Because Eve’s birth rank indicates her inferior substance, women were believed to be inferior to men. Aristotle (as cited in Baring & Cashford, 1991) writes:

For the active power in the seed of the male tends to produce something like itself, perfect in masculinity; but the procreation of a female is the result either of the debility of the active power, of some unsuitability of the material, or of some change effected by external influences, like the south wind, for example, which is damp. (p. 521)

Aristotle presents women as passive recipients of semen, and as a result poor contributors to human birth. The idea persists in European thought. Thomas Aquinas (as cited in Baring & Cashford, 1991) describes women as inferior in rank to men in their capacity to procreate, and men's semen as the active element of birth (p. 521).

The rejection and exile of the feminine are not exclusive to the Western tradition. In Islamic Iran, women's eggs are discounted; their wombs are understood as mere passive vessels through which birth is given. In Iran, infant boys are highly praised and desired; on the other hand, baby girls are undesirable, and women who give birth to girls are considered to have defective chromosomes or defective wombs. It is believed that if women cannot bear males, it is because their bodily elements cannot provide the proper environment for semen to assert itself. In some instances, women are blamed, devalued, and even tortured for their incapacity to give birth. Men are praised for their virility, if they have a boy due to their semen.

Women are merely the property of men in Islam. The dominion of men over women is sanctioned by the Koran: "Men possess a degree of superiority over women because Eve was brought forth out of Adam. Thus the superiority of Adam over Eve extends over the whole male sex in relation to the female sex" (Ibu Arabi Fuhat III, 12.13). Eve is considered inferior due to her birth rank and derivative substance. This verse has been cited as justification for the treatment of women as second-class citizens.

A brief history of the subjugation of women in Iran.

The inferiority and subjugation of women have been part of Persian history. During the Reign of Reza Shah, his wife Shabanoh Farah began some reforms in Iran in favor of women. Unfortunately, the Khomeini government thwarted these reforms. In

today's Iran, Persian women have no right to divorce, and Persian men can have four legal wives and as many temporary wives, called *Seighs*, as they desire. Women have no voice and are hardly protected by the Iranian judiciary system. The children remain with their father after divorce.

Summary of Literature Review

This study uses a phenomenological approach to examine the psychological exile of Persian women under a patriarchal system. Women's psychological exile can be defined as a loss of soul or as a severance from their feminine cores. Soul-in-exile, or soullessness, is a common theme that is treated by preeminent authors in the psychotherapeutic tradition. The characterizations of Carl Jung, Sylvia Brinton Perera, Marion Woodman, Veronica Goodchild, Robert Romanyshyn, Ann Baring, Richard Roberts, Joseph Campbell, Lionel Corbett, Wilfred R. Bion, Heinz Kohut, and D. W. Winnicott have inspired and informed my own understanding.

Dr. Robert Romanyshyn (2004) examines the exile of soul and its return. He argues that Freud's hysteric and Plato's poet are both enslaved to the collective values of society at the expense of their own values. Romanyshyn demonstrates that the archetypal journey of exile and its return is transformative for both the hysteric and the poet, in that it allows the poet and the hysteric to access their true selves by the process of transformation from mimesis (reflecting the values of society) to anamnesis (reflecting their own values).

Unlike Romanyshyn, Veronica Goodchild (2001) takes a more active approach in redeeming the soul. She remarks that the process of honoring the self requires the betrayal of one's self and one's culture, in order to become an orphan. Orphaning oneself

is equivalent to emancipating oneself from the collective values of society. Goodchild advocates leaving the provisional life in order to individuate.

Carl Jung's (1971/1982) idea of exile is a lack of integration between the masculine and the feminine aspects of the soul. Jung believes that in order to individuate, both men and women need to integrate their anima and their animus. Sylvia Brinton Perera (1981) is a follower of Jung. In the place of Jung's integration of animus and anima, she supplies a different metaphor for the process of achieving bipolar wholeness. For Perera, women must shed their patriarchal values and reach wholeness by descending into the underworld. She uses the myth of Inanna to demonstrate how Inanna's descent to the underworld helps her connect with her complement, her anima or her sister Ereshkigal.

Marion Woodman expands on the Jung's idea of a psychic disequilibrium by stating that psychological damage and exile are the result of the severance of men and women from their archetypal ground, their ancestors the Goddesses. She states that the perpetuation of patriarchal values from generation to generation eradicates women from their feminine roots.

Even though Jung and his followers suggest that the split or exile of an individual's soul is inflicted by the culture in which it is raised, they use myths of prehistoric origin to characterize both exile and return. In *the Myth of the Goddess*, Baring and Cashford (1991) take interest in the historical process by which cultures became warped in such a way as to inflict exile on their members. For Baring and Cashford, culture did not always favor the masculine side of the soul.

Baring and Cashford claim that human culture was ruled by a matriarchy for 25 thousand years and revered the Mother Goddess, who symbolized nature's unified containment of opposites and the cyclical process of creation and destruction. According to Baring and Cashford, power shifted in favor of patriarchy during the Bronze Age. The image of the Mother Goddess receded in favor of the Father God, who increasingly appropriated her role. Authors such as Roberts (1985), Campbell (1983) and Corbett (n/d) have attributed the increasing militarism, trade, and industrialization of that period to the rise of patriarchy and masculine deity. The process culminated in the Jewish invention of the monotheistic God, whose various incarnations under Christianity and Islam favor the masculine over the feminine.

According to Baring and Cashford (1991), and de Shong-Meadow (1993), the monotheistic patriarchy split matter and spirit into two spheres, with man or Adam symbolizing spirit and woman or Eve symbolizing matter. According to thinkers from Jung to Baring, Mary was invented in an attempt to redeem women from the sins of Eve. The archetypal image of Mary as a chaste idol left its imprint on the psyche of men. Freud later explained that certain men could no longer integrate sexuality and love, and had to divide women into two objects: good objects such as mothers, or bad objects such as whores.

If, as Baring would have it, culture became warped during history, then the question arises: when does culture have its deleterious effect on individuals? The answer is, of course, during development. Psychoanalysts, such as Heinz Kohut (2009) and D. W. Winnicott (1965), explain how this damage might occur during the process of development. Both authors stress the importance of the interpersonal relationship

between the child and its main caretaker during the critical states of development. Kohut stresses that mirroring is essential in building a cohesive self, and Winnicott argues that a child needs a “good- enough mother” to create a loving atmosphere in which the child can develop a true self.

Statement of the Research Problem and Question

The research problem.

The purpose of this phenomenological research is to investigate the psychological damage Persian women suffer from living in a patriarchal culture, with the goal of tracing that damage back to its original causes in the value structures and practices of the patriarchal culture. Depth psychologists, such as Robert Romanyshyn, Veronica Goodchild, Carl Jung, Marion Woodman, and Ester Harding, provide different but synergistic theoretical frameworks for explaining how culture drives Persian women into a state of psychological exile. Clinical psychologists, such as Heinz Kohut and D. W. Winnicott, explain how this damage might occur during the process of development. In my phenomenological research, I plan to investigate how Persian women experience the state of exile and the cultural forces that drove them there.

As a Persian woman myself, I already had some idea that the Persian patriarchy damages women’s identities and represses their feminine nature by devaluing women, depriving them of their voices, and distorting the lens through which they view the world. Sharing a cultural background and experience with my research subjects will inform and enhance my phenomenological research, though I will have to be very careful to avoid imposing my own preconceptions on them.

The purpose of this research is practical as well as theoretical. Therapy—as a soul-making vessel—offers a return from exile, but only if therapists understand the root causes of these women’s suffering within a patriarchal culture. It is with the goal of providing a roadmap for these therapists that I undertake this project. I will ask questions grouped around different aspects of exile and return. My group of Persian women will then describe their experience of exile in their own language, in order to determine if and how patriarchal culture has contributed to their psychological disfigurement and pain. Only through a greater understanding of patriarchal culture’s role in women’s psychological exile can their return be affected through the art of psychotherapy.

The research question.

The main question that arises from this study is how the patriarchal structure has affected the psyches of Persian women.

Chapter 3 Methodology and Procedures

I intend to employ the phenomenological method in order to explore the psychological exile of women under the patriarchal system of Persian culture, both in Iran and in America.

In *The Interpreted World; An Introduction to Phenomenological Psychology*, Ernesto Spinelli (1989) relates that the phenomenological approach to psychological analysis can be traced back to the revolutionary ideas of Edmund Husserl, who rejected as excessively positivistic the extant explanations of human experience by the philosophers, scientists, and psychologists of his day. The impressive discoveries achieved during the Age of Reason and Age of Enlightenment by scientists such as Isaac Newton, Blaise Pascal, and Galileo Galilei had inspired faith in the power of the scientific method to explain the workings of the natural world. Since the scientific method's system had been so successful in elucidating the physical world, many European thinkers hoped it would be equally successful in elucidating the workings of the human mind through quantitative inquiry into observable and measurable data.

Representative of this kind of thinking was the school of British empiricism, which grew out of the ideas of Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626), a scientist and public intellectual who believed that science should be interested in objective rather than subjective reality, even though objective reality could only be known through the senses. Lionel Corbett (n.d.) in his lecture notes, *History of Psychology Part 2*, relates that for Bacon, perception of the world by the senses is imperfect and given to error, but reason can search for truth by looking for correspondences or contradictions within observations. Knowledge of the world, then, is always provisional, and experiments should try to find

contradictions in accepted knowledge. For Bacon, as for modern scientists, scientific theories can never be entirely proved; instead, they are judged by the simplicity of their explanations of the facts and their agreement with other theories; they accumulate more and more validity as they fail to be disproved by experiment. Corbett (n.d.) claims that Thomas Hobbes (1558-1679) was another empirical psychologist who was deeply influenced by Francis Bacon. Corbett (n.d.) illustrates that Hobbes believed that humans are biological machines living in a mechanistic world. He inspired the Behaviorists with his idea that human psychology could be studied through observation like any other process in the material world. Hobbes totally denied the spiritual dimension of the human being.

According to Corbett (n.d.), Rene Descartes (1596-1650) disagreed with this mechanistic explanation of human psychology. Descartes became famous for his idea of the Cartesian split, dividing the mind and body into two spheres and focusing on the study of senses. According to this dualistic model, the body perceives the world through the senses and supplies these perceptions to the mind; the mind thinks and exercises the will, directing the body to perform behaviors. In his lecture notes, Corbett (n.d.) points out that Descartes's method implies "we can step back from experience and look at it as a collection of sensations that are not part of the self" (p. 14).

In other words, Descartes factored out the self or the soul from conscious experience, instead establishing the soul as something to which experience appeared. Descartes agreed with the Empiricists in believing that the senses were imperfect and often misleading; however, he was not satisfied with the provisional knowledge of the world with which the Empiricists were content, derived by inductive reasoning applied to

their observations. Descartes decided to begin with the mind, whose contents were perfectly accessible to him. He announced his intention to doubt all of his preconceptions, prejudices, and beliefs, witting them away to the most basic ideas, which were, self-evidently, true. Then, through the process of deductive reasoning, he would establish the truth of more specific ideas. Descartes originated the method of psychological inquiry through introspection, though his interest in psychology is primarily founded on a desire to avoid being misled by it in his quest to know the truth about the world.

In *The Art of Inquiry*, Joseph Coppin and Elizabeth Nelson (2004) argue that Descartes's dualistic model of the mind inspires the immensely influential subjectivist model of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), who posited that the very structure of the mind plays a role in determining how experience is constructed, shifting psychological theory away from empiricism. For Kant, the mind has an innate and active capacity to construct experience and ideas from perceptions, or phenomena derived from ontological objects. In other words, the mind plays an active role in defining reality, and its structure determines how things are perceived. The ideas of Kant differed from the empiricists, such as Bacon and Hobbes, who believed that the world could be experienced through the senses. Coppin and Nelson (2004) see Kant's ideas as a direct challenge to the empiricists who advocated that "the mind was a passive receptacle of ideas produced by sensations" (p. 30).

In 1913 John Watson, reacting to the dilemma of consciousness, advocated to return the study of psychology to the approach of empiricists like Bacon and Hobbes. Watson urged psychologists to focus exclusively on people's outward behaviors, because

they are directly observable and measurable in a laboratory. In his article, “Psychology and Phenomenology,” Howard. H. Kendler (2005) states that Watson insisted that the introspective approach to the study of human psychology—developed by Descartes and Kant—was flawed, because a person’s consciousness is totally inaccessible to another person, and the validity of any statements about it are questionable (p. 319).

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) rejected Behaviorism and founded the discipline of modern phenomenology on the ideas of Descartes and Kant. He objected to the refusal of psychologists such as the behaviorists to account for subjective experience. He felt that their methods of investigating objectively observed behavior were reductivist. In *Phenomenological Research Methods*, Clark Moustakas (1994) indicates that, like Kant and Descartes, Husserl also believed that “knowledge based on intuition and essence precedes empirical knowledge” (p. 26).

Husserl’s philosophical ideas and methods have inspired an approach within the discipline of psychology, which has become known as phenomenology. Husserl felt that his method of investigation had a natural affinity for the field of psychology, because they both focus on exploring and describing personal, subjective human experience (Spinelli, 1989).

The phenomenological approach to psychology tries to preserve the rigor of the scientific method, but it emphasizes the necessity of exploring the subjective experience of people, if the richness of the human mind is ever to be properly understood.

Phenomenology, as a science, aims to understand a phenomenon within its natural state, taking into consideration all its complexities and subtleties (Moustakas, 1994).

Phenomenology comes into existence as a method by gathering descriptions about a

phenomenon in order to illuminate its nature (Creswell, 1998). This seems the most appropriate method by which to understand the real-life experiences of Persian women in exile. By exploring how a Persian woman experiences the phenomenon of exile, we can have access to her soul and mind. It is through this journey of discovery that the participants can reveal how living under patriarchy really affects their souls. The descriptions are qualitative and illuminate a deeper dimension of the experience of Persian women. The phenomenological method of inquiry allows for reflection, free associations, and possibly an alchemical process. Phenomenology as a method of inquiry allows the truth to unfold in a natural way as it appears to us. Ernesto Spinelli eloquently describes the background of phenomenology and its significance.

In his book, *The Interpreted World, an Introduction to Phenomenological Psychology*, Spinelli (1989) argues that Edmund Husserl, the founder of the philosophical school of phenomenology, was very much influenced by Brentano's concept of intentionality. Phenomenon comes from the Greek for "the appearance of things," and phenomenology is the "the study of appearances." Spinelli argues that Husserl believed that the way we understand and construct our reality and our experience of the world is through a unique, intentional construct that contains both directional (noematic) and inferential (noetic) factors.

Intentionality is derived from the Latin word *intendere*, meaning, "to stretch forth." Spinelli (1989) states that Husserl adopted Brentano's concept of "consciousness as always consciousness of some 'thing,' since the most basic interpretative act of human consciousness is to experience the world in terms of objects or things" (p. 11). Therefore, our mental faculties stretch towards the object, which is to say the raw matter, the

content, or the “noema,” in order to assign it the meaning or the “noesis” (p. 13). Spinelli explains that Husserl was trying to develop a science of phenomena that would demonstrate how the physical world is experienced and perceived by our consciousness.

To Husserl (1954/1970), “intentional analysis” employs a holistic view of subject-object relations rather than a Cartesian understanding that they are two separate entities. Intentionality is seen within a context. The meaning of the object, the experience, and the intentionality of human mental life are contextual and ecological. They encompass the whole world in which the person resides. A person is not an isolated species. As long as people breathe and live, they are living in relation to some world and therefore are not just the product of an individual’s isolated subjectivity. Instead, this subjectivity is a part of the collective forms of cultural life—ethnic, religious, or national—that Husserl (1954/1970) defines as *Lebenswelt*. In *Phenomenological Research Methods for Counseling Psychology* Frederick J. Wertz (2005) states:

The intentionality of the human life is not an isolated ray, illuminating a single object; intentionality includes its relational context as it illuminates a “world.” The life world manifests itself as a structural whole that is socially shared and yet apprehended by individuals through their own perspectives. (p. 169)

Therefore, when we hear about a person’s experience within their cultural context, we are also learning about the world within which she and others live and breathe. Wertz further explains that within the collective cultural, ethnic form of subjectivity, each person also experiences his being through his own individual history. Husserl (1954/1970) uses the word *Eigenwelt* to describe the personal perspective that is necessary for an individual to meaningfully apprehend the world around them. Wertz (2005) further states that it as “one’s own” perspective, the personal perspective, *Eigenwelt* is intertwined with the live world within which he or she lives. The purpose of my research is to illuminate the

Eigenwelt from which Persian women perceive the culturally structured *Lebenswelt*. I expect this investigation to shed light on the way Persian women have been victimized by their cultural, religious, and ethnic circumstances.

Persian women do not cease being victimized by the patriarchal value structures of their culture just because they have immigrated to the United States. Many Persians left Iran after the revolution in 1979. The majority of Iranians in diaspora live in metropolitan cities such as Los Angeles and New York, where they have gathered into tightly knit communities. Because immigration has been involuntary for this group, due to political upheaval and change of government in Iran, these Persians have fiercely tried to keep their culture and language alive. Fear of assimilation and loss of their native culture, in addition to the fear of being engulfed within a corrupt Western culture, has created solid grounds for bonding amongst the exiled Persians. Racism and anti-Iranian sentiments also fuel a need for cultural bonding. As a result, patriarchal norms and values remain intact in these communities. Patriarchal power relations and sexist values continue to be reinforced and practiced despite the more liberal cultural values of the Western population. There is enormous resistance to acculturation, especially when it comes to women's issues. The native culture in Los Angeles is seen as corrupt, and is blamed for Persian women's rebellion against the patriarchal status quo. The patriarchal system continues to crush the individual hopes and aspirations of women. Moghissi (1999) states: "Sexism and moralistic attitudes are given cultural force and are camouflaged, suppressing expressions of individuality and individual choice. Women, for example, are blamed for the disintegration of the family." Women's independence is

perceived as dangerous and an attack to the family system and cultural loyalties.

Moghissi says that women's voices are muted, and they are labeled as such:

These voices are branded as “subversive, westoxicated” and corrupt. Gender-Conscious women who struggle for integrity and autonomy are viewed as personification of the dominant racist culture and of an enemy who threatens family harmony and cultural identity. Women who refuse to regulate their personal life according to male-defined values are demonized. For some families, the fear of “insubordination” and cultural “mis-conduct” is so grave that they choose to return to Iran to protect their teen-aged daughters from the danger of “moral corruptions.” Evidently, for most parents, particularly for father, the danger of moral and sexual “corruption” primarily threatens girls. (p. 213)

In certain families, girls are encouraged to abstain from sexual relations before marriage in order to preserve their *abroo*, their honor. Chastity is valued highly amongst the traditional patriarchs. As a result, patriarchal values and ideologies play a pivotal role in the diaspora community, and they are very much ingrained in the psyche of Persians.

These cultural values remain even among acculturated women in the expatriate community in Los Angeles. Within the same cultural climate of theocratic and patriarchic repression, each perspective is unique, with its own subtleties and nuances. The hope of this investigation is to pave the road for the many numinous experiences through which Persian women can emerge from their cocoons of exile, transform themselves from grubs into butterflies, and walk towards individuation and growth.

The phenomenological method concentrates on the phenomena and their role in making reality. According to Husserl (1954/1970), the first step in the process of unfolding the truth is the rule of “*epoche*” or “bracketing,” the attempt to perceive and edit out assumptions, expectations, and biases as much as possible in order to allow the experienced phenomenon to unfold itself. The researcher must play an active role in identifying, investigating, and reflecting on his or her own biases in order to arrive at a

more adequate knowledge of reality. It requires an open, flexible lens to look at all possibilities. The second step of the phenomenological method is the rule of “description.” The interviewer needs to avoid intruding explanations or interpretations. The third step of the phenomenological method is “equalization,” which means giving each idea an equal weight and avoiding the assignment to a hierarchy.

The Phenomenological Approach

The philosophical discipline of phenomenology was founded by Edmund Husserl who, Moustakas (1994) argues, was interested in:

Returning to the self to discover the nature and meaning of things as they appear and in their essences. Ultimately all genuine, and in particular, all scientific knowledge rests on inner evidence: as long as such evidence extends, the concept of knowledge extends. (p. 61)

Husserl is asserting that thoughts, feelings, and memories ought to count as evidence and maybe even facts that can be investigated. Husserl’s core investigation was to find the essential meanings in knowledge. He believed that he could reach this goal by creating a philosophy that adhered to subjective openness, an attempted investigation into subjective material.

From the outset, phenomenology was considered to be a non-empirical science because it relied on description of direct awareness or *Anschauung*. Phenomenology was attempting to describe subjective material within consciousness. Husserl was searching for the nature of consciousness and subjectivity, inspiring him to develop the concept of *Erlebnis*, or the lived experience.

Lived experience.

In exploring the story of Persian women, I chose the phenomenological research method, because it allows me to explore their qualitative experience of everyday life,

their lived experience or *Erlebnis*, roughly translated as “experience as we live through it and recognize it as a particular type of experience.” The best way to explore someone's consciousness is therefore to carefully describe the experience of everyday life (Giorgi & Giorgi 2003). In order to study the phenomenon of psychological exile, I decided to choose Persian women who have experienced this phenomenon on a daily basis under patriarchy. Moghissi (1999) defines patriarchy as a “structural and ideological system of domination which produces, sustains and reproduces authoritarian, asymmetrical sexist values and practices” (p. 208). The Persian patriarchal system is a system that defines and treats women as a weak, second-class citizen. As morally and physically inferior citizens, Persian women are denied the same rights that men enjoy. The gender roles are well defined in a Persian society, and the roles and values of women are internalized. Women's roles are mostly limited to being obedient submissive daughters, mothers, and wives. Iranian females are considered to be the property of their husbands. In Iran under Sharia laws, women are denied the right to divorce, and the inheritance laws consider daughters as half persons, leaving sons twice as much inheritance. Moghissi argues that in exile the Persian diaspora has created the necessary ingredients to perpetuate patriarchal ways and ideologies. Moghissi, quoting Said, remarks, “living ‘in the territory of not belonging’ can shift social and political priorities and individual aspirations in favor of maintaining communal dignity and cultural identity at the expense of gender equality and democratic rights” (p. 207). I chose phenomenology as a method because it acknowledges the role of culture in structuring the outer world, and it focuses on the influence of the outer world on the inner world, or lived experience.

Van Manen (1990) elaborates on Husserl's ideas and the meaning of the lived experience. He states that the lived experience is the unreflective, unmediated pure experience of the individual. It is a person's reaction to the world; it is not the reflecting process of our consciousness. Dilthey (1985) describes lived experience as such:

A lived experience does not confront me as something perceived or represented; it is not given to me, but the reality of lived experience is there for me because I have a reflexive awareness of it, because I possess it immediately as belonging to me in some sense. Only in thought does it become objective. (p. 223)

Dilthey is suggesting that in its most pure form, the lived experience is a reflexive: awareness unaware of itself, or an immediate prereflective consciousness of life. The notion of live experience, as developed by phenomenologists like Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, was to discover directly the original dimensions of human existence. Van Manen states that Merleau-Ponty calls the notion of lived experience, the pre-reflective consciousness and the immediate awareness, a "sensitivity" (p. 36). Phenomenologists want the experience as fresh and as authentic as possible.

The life world.

What distinguishes phenomenological research is that it begins by studying the life world rather than the real world. Husserl (1954/1970) came up with the idea of the lifeworld (*lebenswelt*), as the world of lived experience. Van Manen's (1990) research indicates that Husserl describes "the life world" as the "world of immediate experience, the world as 'already there'" or "pre-given," the world as it is experienced in its "natural, primordial attitude," or that of "original natural life" (p. 182). By natural, Husserl means things in their original, virginal state.

The Interview

The concept of exile from patriarchy is best studied within the philosophical tradition of phenomenology. According to Husserl (1954/1970), the best way to explore consciousness is to carefully describe the lived experience—the life world—since every person is present to the world. I believe phenomenology to be the most suitable method of investigating human consciousness. Its strength lies in its attempt to explore the subjective world of an individual and its relevance in my study allows for in depth search of the human psyche. I used the phenomenological method in order to uncover Persian women's experience of exile. As a researcher, I interviewed women who have experienced this phenomenon of exile. Moustakas (1990) notes that “only the experiencing persons by looking at their own experiences, perceptions, thoughts, feelings and sense—can validly provide portrayals of experience. If one is to know and understand another's experience, one must converse directly with the person” (p. 26). The research interview is like a daily conversation between two people with a mutual interest. Kvale (1996) states that the “research interview is an interpersonal situation, a conversation between two partners about a theme of mutual interest. It is a specific form of human interaction in which knowledge evolves through a dialogue” (p. 125). The dialogue is between two partners: the interviewer who is eager to know learn from the experience of the participant, and the participant who is eager to share his or her story.

To converse freely and candidly, a cooperative and personal environment needs to be established between the researcher and the participants. Colaizzi (1978) states that phenomenological research is personal and provides a trusting ambiance, in which researcher and participant can explore their topic. My aim is to create an atmosphere of

trust and comfort, enabling women to relate their stories as freely as possible. Colaizzi argues that within a framework of trust, more existential aspects of the self will reveal themselves. To create a trusting atmosphere for my informants is quite challenging, because Persian women have been silenced for years and have a hard time expressing themselves emotionally. However, a containing, trusting environment is a necessary foundation for women to tell their stories. This atmosphere of trust needs to be created rapidly. During therapy, people have time to establish trusting relationships slowly over time; however, during this research project, the interviewer needs to establish contact and accumulate data in a short period of time. One way of achieving our goal and encouraging our participants to unveil themselves is imagining ourselves in their position and asking them to be our teachers.

An open phenomenological approach to the interview is advocated wholeheartedly and eloquently by Spradley (1979):

I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them. Will you become my teacher and help me understand? (p. 34)

Spradley is trying to say that he is a blank slate, open, ready, fully engaged, and willing to immerse himself in the world of the interviewer in order to understand and learn about his experiences. In a phenomenological interview, Spradley is walking in the room fresh, without any previous assumptions or opinions on his subjects.

Research Methodology

I employed the interview method because it appeared to be the most appropriate tool for exploring the psychological damage that Persian women have endured during

their lives. The phenomenologist is not an empiricist who is blandly observing or categorizing a phenomenon; his or her job is not just a bland empirical observation, or positivist categorization, of phenomena. Roger Brooke (1991) states “reality as it is present within lived experience is the mistress to whom the phenomenologist promises to remain faithful at all times” (p. 31). The phenomenologist is loyal to his quest to inquire in the most pure, uncensored way possible. The phenomenological approach will give women a deeper voice, enriching their stories and allowing all of their nuances to emerge.

The rule of epoche.

Bracketing or submitting to the rule of epoche is the first and most essential part of the phenomenological interview. This method emphasizes the importance of the researcher in the process of the data collection and inquiry. The researcher is an important medium, allowing for the phenomenon to emerge in its most pure and authentic state. Ideal bracketing acknowledges the pivotal position of the interviewer in the process of seeking unassailable truths. Ideal bracketing requires interviewers to put aside various internal and external assumptions. The researcher has to bracket her natural attitude, which consists of her internal beliefs, assumptions, culture, biases, and experiences. The interviewer must also set aside suppositions connected with external phenomena. Thus, free from any distorting interpretation, the researcher can investigate his or her phenomenon. I understand that it is impossible to bracket all biases or beliefs perfectly.

My first task as a researcher was to identify and to make transparent to myself my own internal suppositions, and suspend my expectations and assumptions. I needed to become conscious of the limitations of my own perspective, and make sure that they

were spelled out in the study. Furthermore, I constantly checked my assumptions and limitations while I was doing the interviews and analyzing the data. I also needed to be aware of my countertransference and the inter-subjective field that developed between the participant and me.

This study emerged from my own shadows and from the psychological damage that I personally endured throughout my life. Because a dimension of this study is personal in nature, from the very beginning, my own perspective was spelled out in the study. My predispositions to the topic of study arose from the following facts:

1. The researcher is a Persian woman who has been personally affected by the suppression of women in a patriarchal society.
2. The researcher is a practicing psychotherapist in the Persian community and is trying to empower women.
3. The researcher is trying to work closely with Persian institutions in the community to eradicate the stigma towards women.

The rule of description.

The second step in the phenomenological method is known as the rule of description. Spinelli (1989) states that the core of the rule of description is to describe rather than explain (p. 17). Spinelli goes on to say that we need to be loyal to the phenomenon in question, by focusing on the concrete and immediate experience of the participant without interpreting, questioning, denying, or explaining it. We need to report a concrete description of the subjective variables that make up the life world of our subjects. Concrete descriptions, because of the nature of the inquiry, transcend the concreteness of the experience and illuminate the core of the personal experience and

topic. Roger Brook (1991) argues that the data gathered in phenomenological research ought to be concrete in order to ensure that the researcher engages in epoche, discarding all preconceptions and biases and focusing on the psychological life of the participant.

Giorgi and Giorgi (2003) state, in *The Descriptive Phenomenological Psychological Method*, that the discovery of essentialness is a process that can be explored through the method of free imaginative variation. Giorgi and Giorgi go on to argue that the process of imaginative variation is necessary to discovering essentialness.

Giorgi and Giorgi (2003) use the example of a cup to elucidate this point. They ask the question, what determines “cupness?” Is it color, shape, or material? What they conclude is that material has its limits and needs to be nonporous to hold liquid, to make a cup a cup. Therefore, the essential element that prevents the cup from collapsing is its nonporousness. This rule will allow me to look at the essentialness of the experience of the participants.

The Rule of Horizontalization.

The third step of the phenomenological method is “equalization,” which means giving each idea equal weight.

The Participants

Adopting the phenomenological method, I explored the life world of women exiled from themselves as a result of their patriarchal culture. I interviewed women in three age groups: 25, 45, and 65, in order to get some sense of a generational difference of exile. Each group was represented by three Persian women who voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. These women had to be Persians who had lived either in Iran or Los Angeles under a patriarchal system. The younger generations were raised by Persian

parents. They were selected randomly for their rich experience of the topic of interest. Informants were motivated, self-reflective, and articulate. The process of researching and investigating the topic involved conducting interviews with all participants and getting their perspectives, then comparing and contrasting their views in the search for emergent themes.

Participant solicitation.

Participants in this study were garnered via word of mouth and through referrals from friends, family members, and colleagues. I distributed flyers that announced the details of the research. The flyers explained the study's procedures and confidentiality issues. Flyers were printed in both English and Persian. I invited volunteers interested in the topic to contact me. Participants joined a "pool" from which few were selected. Participation in this study was on a voluntary basis, and participants were informed before the interview that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. The participants were assured that their identity would remain anonymous, whether they decided to participate, decline, or withdraw from the study. I used fictitious names for the participants. Each participant was named after a flower that grows in a different region of Iran. I concealed the participants' identity to my best possible ability without altering the descriptions or the content of the interview. From the beginning, the risks and benefits of the study were outlined for the participants. They were informed that in case they experienced any negative emotions or had any question, they could contact the chair of the study. The researcher provided the name and contact number of the chair. In addition, the researcher would provide names of therapists if participants needed further processing of the material. The purpose of the study was

explained, and participants were invited to ask questions. Furthermore, the participants were told that the interview would last approximately one to one and a half hours.

Within this time frame, the pace of the interview was designed according to the needs of each participant. Breaks were taken as needed by the participants.

Selection criteria.

Volunteers were prescreened to insure that they were emotionally and psychologically stable enough to participate in the research study. They had to be motivated, self-reflective, and articulate, willing to give lengthy and rich descriptions of the phenomenon. As Kvale (1996) indicates, a good interviewee is cooperative, focused, and can provide coherent and concise answers (p. 146). During their formative years, the volunteers must have lived, breathed, and experienced the phenomenon of psychological exile under a patriarchal system in Iran or Los Angeles. Other criteria for a rich interview include the ability of the interviewee to be spontaneous, direct, and truthful, in order to give relevant and specific answers.

Materials

The open-ended interview is midway between a formal questionnaire and a totally unstructured interview. This open-ended interview focused on a set of thematically related topics drawn from the researcher's review of literature, as well as her prior experience with the topic under study. Open-ended interviews must have preselected topics for discussion, which help keep the investigation focused, while at the same time allow subjects the freedom to engage their imaginations in their descriptions. As a result, the researcher stays open to surprise by topics of discussion that go beyond

those anticipated. In effect, the guiding topic serves as a generous boundary that leaves all participants the freedom to express themselves fully.

The open-ended interview is a type of phenomenological interview developed by Dr. Robert Romanyshyn at Duquesne University, and has been used by many of his students such as Mantecon (1994) and Barrett (1997) at Pacifica Graduate Institute. In order to understand the psychological elements of an experience, Giorgi and Giorgi (2003) argue that we need to start with a description of the phenomenon. That is accomplished by means of an interview. They assert that the purpose of the interview is to give us a faithful and detailed understanding of the participant's experience of a situation, which the researcher is seeking. In order for participants to describe their stories of exile as faithfully as possible within the patriarchal world within which they live, the following questions were asked.

Introductory question.

What is like to be a woman under a patriarchal regime?

Follow-up questions.

How do you experience your voice under patriarchy?

How do you express yourself under patriarchy?

How does *abroo* affect you? How do you experience your sense of self?

Do you experience any psychological symptoms under patriarchy?

How do you experience your sexuality under patriarchy?

How are you perceived by men under patriarchy?

How do men perceive you under patriarchy?

Patriarchy does not oppress women in the same way in the native culture of Iran as it does in the expatriate culture of Los Angeles. Many forms of oppression are still operant, and Persian women may spend the majority of their lives in a ghettoized community that almost exactly functions like the culture in Iran; however, most women will live simultaneously in both the immigrant and general culture of America; they will have the protection of American law, the inspiration of American ideas of equality and liberty, and the support of American friends. American culture can act as an antidote to the poisonous influence of Persian patriarchy. American culture might actually ameliorate the conditions of exile. How is this state of living simultaneously in two cultures the same or different than living in Iran? Even if a woman were to escape from the Persian immigrant culture and go live entirely in American culture (or even live as a hermit), she would take her deeply rooted exile with her. So, patriarchy's influence has been internalized by these women. They can only escape their exile through therapy or other means.

The remnants of the patriarchal system are deeply embedded in the psyches of Persian women. Patriarchy is like a disease that grows and dwells in a person. It is a challenge to uproot this system, when it has left such strong and deep imprints on the soul and the body.

Procedures

Research procedure for gathering data.

Informants were asked to reflect and to provide a full-range narrative of their experiences. Interviews were open-ended, and participants were encouraged to narrate their experience of exile freely. The interviews were conducted one-on-one, just the

researcher and the participant. Informants were given maximum flexibility and were encouraged to speak about pertinent themes that were most noteworthy to them. Open-ended interviews left room for co-researchers to amplify their experience of exile within a boundary established by the researcher. Interviews were audio taped for approximately one to one and a half hours in a location comfortable and agreeable to the informants. The length varied according to the nature of the interview and the experience of the participant. After the interviews were done, they were transcribed and analyzed using the “portrait” analysis model.

Procedures for analyzing data.

The ‘portrait’ method was developed by Romanyshyn during the time he was working on his doctoral dissertation at Duquesne University. Romanyshyn’s method allows researchers and informants the freedom to cooperate in the creative process of the dialectic interview. This method has been successfully used by researchers such as Mantecon (1994) and Barrett (1997) at Pacifica Graduate Institute. After interviews were completed, I reread the transcribed interviews as many times as necessary in order to gain a deeper understanding of the life experience of my subjects. The transcription of the interview became the raw data for my dissertation. In *Descriptive Phenomenological Psychological Method*, Giorgi and Giorgi (2003) emphasize the importance of reading the data in their totality because, as they point out, the phenomenological perspective toward research is a holistic one. Giorgi and Giorgi state that we cannot start the analysis of data without knowing how it ends; in other words, we need to know the whole picture of the phenomenon in question before we can embark on the next step of analysis (p. 251). Therefore, the phenomenological analysis attempts to discern the psychological

essence of the phenomenon in its totality. This discernment was done using a variation of the Giorgi method of interview data analysis (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003), combined with Robert Romanyshyn's portrait analysis (Romanyshyn, personal communications, 2010, 2011). First, natural meaning units (NMUs) were extracted from the transcribed material. NMUs are units of speech that form a distinct, independent, and complete thought or feeling. Second, the NMUs were compared and condensed into themes, or "aspects," upon which the NMUs converge. Next, a second-order profile was extracted from the aspects for each individual (see appendix). Then a portrait was formulated from each participant's narrative. At that point, the portraits were given to participants for their approval. The themes were presented to the participants for verification of the validity of the analysis. The informants reviewed the portraits and were able to give me more insight and clarification. The nine participants approved the summaries of their narratives and some were ecstatic, some sad, some surprised, but all of them were moved from hearing their uncensored voice. Some participants asked that minor changes be made to the portraits, others asked for more anonymity. The portraits were ultimately validated by the participants, and participants stated that the essence of their experience and the proper themes were extracted.

Portraits were then compared. The analysis of the nine portraits was used to extract common themes. A final composite portrait was made weaving all the common themes.

Procedures for dealing with ethical concerns.

Ethical considerations are of utmost importance in conducting the qualitative research interviews designed to explore the lived experiences of their participants.

Because of the personal nature of both the topic and the research approach, ethical considerations were kept in mind during all stages of data collection and analysis. Due to the intimate nature of qualitative research, ethical issues arose at different stages of the interviewing process. The ethical guidelines of informed consent, confidentiality, and beneficence were clearly presented and thoroughly discussed with the interviewees before the commencement of the interview.

The ethical guidelines and procedures were designed to protect the well-being and dignity of the participants during and after the interviews. Kvale (1996) states, “a central aim of social science is to contribute knowledge to ameliorate the human condition and enhance human dignity” (p. 109). Kvale goes on to quote the American Psychological Association’s ethical principles:

Psychologists respect the dignity and worth of the individual and strive for the preservation and protection of fundamental human rights. They are committed to increasing knowledge of human behavior and of people’s understanding of themselves and others and to the utilization of such knowledge for the promotion of human welfare. (p. 109)

I complied with the APA and Pacifica standards for conducting research with human participants, and before I began, I gained approval from the Pacifica doctoral committee and Ethics Committee.

Informed consent.

After receiving the approval of the committee, I began to solicit and select participants. I then provided informed consent forms to my participants, highlighting the nature of the study. Co-researchers were informed, both verbally and in writing, of the purpose and procedures of the investigation. Furthermore, the informed-consent form highlighted the potential risks and benefits of the study; it made clear that participation

was voluntary, and that informants could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The informed consent form made clear that participants would receive no monetary compensation. The participants were informed that their interviews were published as a dissertation, and that parts of their interviews were used in other publications or public presentations. Participants received a copy of the informed consent form. Once the forms were signed, I then proceeded with the interviews.

Confidentiality.

The complete confidentiality of participants' identities was spelled out to them clearly in the informed consent form. In order to preserve their anonymity, participants in the study were named after flowers native to various regions of Iran. Each participant was assured that the interviewer would be the only person who knew her identity. If transcribers were used, the identities of the participants would be concealed. Materials would be kept private and, in the event of early withdrawal from the interview, the data would be destroyed. The participants were assured before the interview that they would remain anonymous to transcriber.

Beneficence.

A study that entails human participation carries with it the risk of emotional, psychological, social, political, or physical distress. As a researcher, I emphasized to my participants that participation was voluntary and that interviewees could terminate the interview at any time if they found the material distressing to them. I promised to provide any support necessary during and after the study. I remained open and empathic throughout the study. I assured them that, in the event they suffered distress from the interview process, I would make three referrals for therapists. Participants were informed

that they would receive no monetary rewards and that their material would be published as a doctoral dissertation of Pacifica, and possibly in other forms.

Chapter 4 Overview and Results

Overview

To explore the real-life phenomenon of Persian women living under patriarchy, a phenomenological approach to investigation was adopted. As chapter 3 (the review) has shown, the phenomenological approach allows for the pure untainted reality of the phenomenon to emerge and reveal its complexities and its multifaceted dimensions. This approach allows for a more in depth research of the phenomenon. The aim of this study was to ask questions that will expose the phenomenon in questions as transparently and clearly as possible. Spinelli (1989) succinctly notes that phenomenologists propose that

experience of the world is always made up of an interaction between the raw matter of the world, whatever that may be, and our mental faculties. We never perceive only raw matter; just as, similarly, we never perceive only mental phenomena. We always experience the interaction between the two. (p. 8)

The human experience that emerges is a delicate dance between our perception of things and raw matter. Thus reality, according to phenomenologists, is not split between subject and object creating a Cartesian duality, but rather the reality of the object is the underlying meaning of the experience of the individual (Creswell, 1998). This form of study examines the phenomenon in question and the meaning it holds for the participant.

Edie (1962) states that what phenomenology really entails is the science of experience, and it is a science neither of object nor of subject. There is a refusal of the subject-object dichotomy, and the focus is the “point of contact where being and consciousness meet” (p. 19). The essence reality of the object lies within the meaning of the experience of the individual. The experience of the participants became the focal point of this study.

The preferred psychological approach to phenomenology that was the appropriate approach for this study is found in Duquesne's studies in phenomenology. According to Edie (1962), Duquesne's core views are

to determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it. From the individual descriptions, general or universal meanings are derived, in other words, the essences of the structure of the experience. (p. 13)

In order to explore the essence of the experience, there are certain procedures in using the phenomenological method. The first step is to abide by the rule of epoche. As I was working on this dissertation, I tried as much as possible to be open to the experience of the participant without having any expectations or agendas. My role as a vessel was to provide a comfortable and trusting environment where the participants could share their stories as candidly as possible without feeling any pressure. I tried to be as true to the process as possible by putting aside my biases, prejudices, and assumptions on the topic. Part of the rule of epoche was for me to be cognizant of *bracketing* my expectations of the outcome. "The rule of epoche urges us to impose an 'openness' on our immediate experience so that our subsequent interpretations of it may prove to be more adequate" (Spinelli, 1989, p. 17).

The next step is the rule of description (Spinelli, 1989, p. 17). I described the experience of the participants without boxing them into my own explanations or stipulations. Third, I abided by the rule of horizontalization, or equalization (Spinelli, 1989). Themes that emerged from the interview were all treated with the same amount of significance and importance.

Cognizant of the phenomenological procedures, I presented a series of research questions (pp. 67-68 and appendix) to the participants with the aim that the questions will

explore and capture the rich, contextual, and lived experience of the phenomenon in question. Given the fact that the interviews consisted of open-ended questions, the length of each interview lasted anywhere from 45 minutes to an hour and a half. Some participants were more eager to give examples and details of their experiences, and their interviews lasted longer. Some participants were simply more loquacious than others. All participants were given ample time to reflect and answer the questions. All the interviews were tape recorded and then transcribed by a researcher. To ensure confidentiality, each participant was named after a flower in Iran.

The next step was to write a narrative that created a “portrait” of each participant’s experience, staying as close as possible to the original language and themes. After the completion of the narrative, I gave the narratives back to the informants, asking them if what I wrote adequately described their experience. I recorded the second interview when the informants decided to make changes or amplifications. In the final portrait, I integrated the two narratives.

A portrait was constructed for each participant, describing her phenomenological experience. In the final process, the portraits were compared and contrasted in order to extract common themes.

Portraits

Portrait 1.

The themes identified for this portrait are:

- ❖ Prince Syndrome: women love their sons more than their daughters.
- ❖ Societal pressure of *abroo*.
- ❖ Roles defined: women are dutiful, obedient wives and mothers.

- ❖ Male dominancy: emotional and verbal abuse. Women are property of men: no decision-making power.
- ❖ Loss of voice. Both genders maintain and transmit patriarchal values from generation to generation.
- ❖ Gender inequality. Feminine power dismissed; women reduced to having low self-worth; therapy as a salvation increased her self-esteem.

Sunflower

My mother has very high expectations for her daughters, and believes that a dutiful daughter's obligation is to cater unconditionally to her mother, without being acknowledged. However, if her son does a minor favor for her, she broadcasts it to the world and makes it a big deal. She yells from the roof, "My son came and took me to the doctor."

In a country where men are revered, where boys are put on pedestals from the time they are born and throughout their lives, Sunflower was considered a valuable commodity. She was a carrier of luck and prosperity, because her birth coincided with the financial blossoming of her father's business. She says, "every Shabbat my grandmother, who was living above us, insisted upon looking at my face first, before looking at other faces in the family. Because she believed I was the carrier of good luck, and my trait was contagious." This was the beginning of Sunflower's legacy as the carrier of luck.

Sunflower was born in Tehran, to a semimodern family of means. Sunflower had certain privileges, such as participating in sports and pursuing higher education. Yet under the walls of patriarchy, the walls of her father's house, she was suffocating. She obeyed the rules of the house in order to prevent the anger of her parents. Her parents interfered with all her decisions, and under the confines of this patriarchy, Sunflower had

no voice. Her opinion had no weight. Sunflower was never allowed to express her thoughts or feelings. Out of fear, she became her father's image of the dutiful daughter, which she calls a peaceful marionette. She was her mother's clone, her mirror. She had to dress exactly like her mom, to portray a perfect image to the world.

Living under patriarchy took its toll on Sunflower's psyche. The patriarchal nature of Persian culture muted her ability to express her feelings. It also eroded her self-esteem, self-confidence, and decision-making skills. As a result, she was unable to stand against the tide of societal and family pressures that forced her to get married at a young age. Sunflower was forced into this arranged marriage by her nuclear and extended family. She felt as though she was being bartered over, like chattel. Sunflower related this example of family's interference:

My uncle insisted that luck knocks on one's door only once, and one does not kick luck away, meaning that this man is a great match, and I should consider him. My aunt said, "If it is your destiny, you will marry him, and if it is not your *kesmat* (destiny), he will leave." I told my aunty, "If there is an open well, should I throw myself in it, and say it is my faith? This is a very fatalistic point of view. I have to study now, and I will answer later." For a month there was huge pressure from all sides for me to answer.

Sunflower describes herself as a "donkey," a Persian expression for someone who is naïve and obedient. Sunflower's hope was that marriage would save her from her parents' dictatorship, but this belief itself proved to be naïve. She was leaving one dictatorship for another. She was under the spell of her husband's false self; he had shown her an image of a kind, that of the distinguished elegant man with a liberal view on life. He promised her that when they left Iran for the States, she would be able to pursue her education. Prior to her finishing college, her father had promised to send her

abroad to finish her education. Sunflower says that all of those promises turned out to be lies.

Once she left her father's house, Sunflower felt she was spineless. Her father had brainwashed her into thinking that "once a girl leaves her father's house, she is no longer his property and has no right to her father's belongings." Sunflower thus became the property of another, and was forced into exile.

After marrying the man who had promised her a peaceful, loving marriage, Sunflower saw his true face, the face of a tyrant. Her husband, who had studied abroad, had remained a patriarch at his core. Sunflower was forced to live under the oppressive rule of her husband and her in-laws, without having the slightest voice or opinion of her own. Her life was dictated to her, down to the minutest detail. She was not even able to buy daily necessities without her husband's permission.

During her marriage, she was repressed sexually. Sunflower admits that nobody ever taught her that she could enjoy her body; she was taught that her body was only a vessel to procreate. Love was never mentioned in her father's home, and she never learned how to express her affection for her husband. She considers this a huge loss, the voice of affection, a voice she never developed. This voice was not used by her husband either.

Sunflower's husband kept attacking her verbally, emotionally, and physically. He would constantly put her down, telling her that she would amount to nothing, that she would never learn to speak English properly, and that no one would give her a job.

Sunflower changed her life by seeking help. After seeking therapy, she found the strength to free herself and her children from bondage. Divorce was liberating, as though

she was suddenly released from a cage. She tried to teach her daughter to choose her husband smartly, to have the luxury of getting to know him before marriage. But Sunflower now feels a bit disappointed in her daughter's choice, because she feels her daughter unconsciously chose a man with traits similar to her father.

Sunflower's *joie de vivre* salvaged her during rough times. She believes her *joie de vivre* comes from her malleability, her flexibility to her environment and situation. Although she admits to feeling a great deal of pain in her life, she never sought relief via antidepressants. Her antidepressants were her yoga practice, her shopping sprees, her love of movies, her toiletries, and her expression through clothes. Work has also added tremendously to her life.

Sunflower has learned to not live her life for others or for her *abroo*. Her son has been her best teacher. Her son has encouraged her to put herself and her needs first. Her self-esteem classes have taught her "first me, second me and third me." She states that in a Persian woman's life, the values are reversed. Women count as nothing, and they have to cater first to their husbands, their children, their in-laws, and extended family.

Sunflower realized at the age of 65 that it was wrong to neglect herself. Today she is combating a deadly disease. She states that the younger generations of Persians live their lives for themselves, rather than keeping *abroo*. Sunflower is doing the same.

Sunflower's mother appeared like a queen to the world, with her demeanor, her stylish hairdos and clothes. Yet her mother dresses like a maid in the interiors of her patriarchal world. Unlike her mother, Sunflower has broken the circle of keeping *abroo*. She says, "When I wake up, I put on my make-up, I wear my best dress. I look good, both outside and inside my home."

Portrait 2.

The themes identified for this portrait are:

- ❖ Prince Syndrome: women love their sons more than their daughters.
- ❖ Both genders maintain and transmit patriarchal values from generation to generation.
- ❖ Gender inequality: feminine power dismissed.
- ❖ Loss of voice; emotional voice is silent.
- ❖ Societal pressure in the form of *abroo*; social mask.
- ❖ Psychological problems (low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and powerlessness): I am a handless maiden.
- ❖ Triangulation.
- ❖ Madonna-whore complex.
- ❖ Male dominant: impairs judgment.
- ❖ Identification with the father.

Camellia

I had a dream recently . . . that I rescued a man, from the top of a mountain that was tumbling, crumbling, and I brought him down to earth, and I was eating a round cookie. He took a piece of that, and he was very regal, very comfortable in his masculinity, and I was going to marry him, and I saw myself in a white satin wedding dress with camellias in my hair. Camellias in my hair are Billy Holiday. It represents a very mournful voice, mourning the journey that patriarchy imposes on women's lives, the deadening effect it has had in my life.

Camellia became aware of gender differences and the power structure of patriarchy at a very early age. The patriarchs in her world held all of the power. They devalued and dismissed the feminine, leaving women powerless and their sons and daughters crippled. From birth to death, women and their children fell under the spell of

patriarchy. Affecting all aspects of social life, patriarchal oppression damaged the psyche of both men and women. It was passed down from one generation to the next, in a perpetual cycle of dysfunction.

Camellia says that a Persian woman “carries this mindset throughout her life, from her father’s home to her husband’s house.” She states that, unconsciously, women infuse patriarchal values into their sons, allowing them to dominate and oppress other women. She describes how “the mothers themselves become the butchers of the feminine, by devaluing the feminine and by living and breathing patriarchal values.” Women do it to women; they dominate and control other women. The oppressive mothers-in-law try to dominate their brides, try to demean them with verbal abuse in the presence of their sons and others. Camellia feels that “the oppression of woman does not only infiltrate the world of men, it creeps into the world of women and affects the whole system.” The whole system is, in essence, infected.

The power structure of patriarchy played a role in Camellia’s family dynamics. Her father was powerful, and her mother powerless. Defending her mother on one hand, and resenting her powerlessness on the other, she began identifying with her father. As a result, she disassociated from her body and rejected the feminine. She became a linear being, living “from the neck up.” She pushed marriage away and became a powerhouse of energy, concentrated on education and intellect in order to identify with her father.

Camellia reflects upon this tendency:

The devaluation of the feminine—and her powerlessness—has created a dual scenario, where Persian women either feel devalued and . . . crushed, or they feel they have no power or choice. “I don’t have a choice; my hands are tied; I give up; I am the handless maiden; my hands are cut off.” This is a really negative force in women’s lives in Iran.

It was through her education and freedom in the United States that Camellia was able to reconnect with her body and the feminine. In college, she began to express herself, but her voice remained an intellectual voice; her emotional voice remained silent. Later, she met a man who was invested in her whole being, and she began the journey of self-exploration. However, the relationship did not last long, and she ended up marrying a Middle Eastern man with patriarchal beliefs. It was a deadening experience, and she describes her relationship as a vision from a painting by Frieda Kahlo “where I literally gave a transfusion of blood, from my being to this man, in order to wake him up.”

Camellia describes how her divided self functions in the world. She remarks that the culture of *abroo* creates two personas, a public persona and a private persona. The public persona is a superficial persona, through which Persians show a perfect false image of themselves outside of their homes. *Abroo*, of course, is associated with family honor, and the concept of *abroo* is the art of keeping face. The honor of the man and his family has to remain intact at all times. For Camellia, the false image was no longer her truth; under the system of covering herself, she felt suffocated and became an introvert. For women, she says there is “deep, twisted social structure” where on “a personal level, the false image was no longer my truth.” She admits, “it was deadening and false, and I could not deal with this falseness.”

Camellia remarks that under patriarchy, she has developed two distinct voices, the outer voice and the inner voice. The outer voice allows her to navigate through the social venues of patriarchy. Sadly, a woman’s outer voice is stifled in social settings. As a young girl at family gatherings, when she tried to voice herself and talk about a subject with which she was familiar, Camellia was immediately shunned by her father and others

for expressing her opinion. Camellia states that her outer voice has been conditioned to be soft and nonthreatening.

The inner voice is the voice of judgment, fear, and conflict. The inner voice splits women into two spheres, of Madonna and whore. Voice and sexuality are intertwined. Patriarchy splits women into either whores or virgins. It is a voice that suppresses sexuality and femininity.

As virgins, patriarchy raises and nurtures women to be someone's wife, with the purpose of serving their husband. Women are virginal objects raised for their wedding nights. Camellia states:

It is a custom in Iran that, when young women come out of shower, women bless them to get married. I felt objectified, and I resented that every time I stepped out of the shower, someone blessed me, saying, "I pray that you come out of the shower of your wedding night." It felt like I was an object being raised for my wedding night. I felt that, as a woman, I was solely valuable as an object in a man's life.

Camellia felt objectified; she tried to cover her body. She never wore revealing clothes, and wore black colors in order to not draw focus to herself. She wanted men to value her, not her body, and so she developed her intellect.

Overall, Camellia feels that patriarchy is a disease; it impairs judgment and creates seclusion. She feels that under this system, men are abusive. They are damaged goods because they devalue the feminine and disconnect from it. She feels that even the younger generation of boys in the States feels entitled to be arrogant, obnoxious, and boisterous. They have an unjustified sense of validity. With regret, she feels that the girls are stuck between the patriarchal values of their parents and the superficial values of Hollywood.

Portrait 3.

The themes identified for this portrait are:

- ❖ Societal Pressure in the form of *abroo*: perfect appearance and image.
- ❖ Male dominance: emotional and verbal abuse; psychological problems (low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression).
- ❖ Gender inequality: feminine power dismissed.
- ❖ Loss of voice. Emotional voice is silent. Erosion of self.
- ❖ Madonna-whore complex.
- ❖ Woman's role is defined to be a housewife. Her role is to cook, clean, and take care of the children.
- ❖ Men's allegiance and affection is to their own family.
- ❖ Culture of secrecy.
- ❖ Empowerment through work.

Yas (Jasmine)

The first thing I would say is that there is no self any more; the self disappeared a long time ago. As I said, in wanting to maintain peace with the patriarchs, I forgot about myself. For me, peace was the most important thing. I am not here anymore; part of me died, hoping to be me. It stopped when I wanted to be me. Everything, from my lifestyle to my marriage and my community, made me disappear.

Yas's most significant task is to please her husband and attend to his needs, instantly and at all times. Any deviation from the demands of her husband creates upheaval and chaos in her family system, to the point that her husband uses intimidation and threats as a means to control Yas. His psychological weapon is the threat of divorce. Coming from a divorced family, Yas is frightened of abandonment. Her most prevalent fear is to share the similar dark destiny of her mother, to end up alone in the world.

Without financial backing or a skill with which to build an independent life, Yas has no place to turn. In her culture, divorce has many negative connotations and consequences. It is the ultimate failure vis-a-vis herself, her family, and her community. Divorce tears her mask of *abroo*, in which she portrays herself as the perfect wife, mother, and daughter. According to Yas, divorce will tarnish her image, for all of the generations before her parents and the generations after her kids. In losing face this way, she feels that she will fail herself, by not fulfilling the role of subservient wife. Divorce also means a return to her mother's house, where she feels that she will be subject to further emotional abuse. She predicts that she will be plagued by her mother's condemnations that divorce was her own fault. Essentially stuck, Yas further subjugates herself to the demands and whims of her husband.

Yas remarks that in a patriarchal society, women are trained to be obedient. A small rebellion by women, a tilting of the status quo, is usually unsuccessful. She thinks it will end in the further surrender of women. Women surrender because patriarchy attack with anger and intimidation. Yas states, "If you don't let go, it will cost you, it will cost you your family, life, and sanity." Out of fear, Yas stopped all her cultural activities, as well as any activity that brought her joy and cemented her being. Yas says:

In the process of always pleasing the man, I feel I lost myself and I forget about what I want. At the beginning, I tried to fight it, but then it was not worth it to fight, so I let loose my identity, and handed my identity to him. I felt guilty, because I saw he was not happy. In our culture, we are told that you need to make your man happy. So at all times, I wanted to do things to please him, but he still was difficult to please, and he still wanted to do other stuff . . . he kept blaming me for everything that does not work in his life.

The psychological symptoms of guilt and loss of identity eroded Yas's sense of self. This sense of self was further degraded by comments from her husband, indicating

that no one wants her and she will never amount to anything. Yas's view of men is very low; she feels they are abusive but wear a mask of deceit during their courtship, and court women as though they are princesses. Yet once women become their acquisitions "they become nasty, they launch their inner wolves, and they begin to bite so hard and so long."

The tyranny of her husband on the one hand and the culture of *abroo* on the other made Yas feel like a martyr. Not only she did she have to be the perfect wife at home, but she also had to portray this perfect image to the Persian community.

Abroo is a nice polished façade, where you have a nice family and good finances. To keep *abroo* is the most important thing. You need to throw parties, you need to take care of the house, and maintain a certain life style. If you have to go out of your way, go into debt, borrow money or do whatever it takes, it doesn't matter, you need to keep that *abroo*.

In the Persian community your *abroo*, your worth, is measured by the block you live on, by the kind of car you have, by the clothes you wear, by the kind of profession you hold, and by your overall appearance. Yas notes:

you have to always say and pretend everything is good, is perfect, as if you have the best life. If you have a lot of money, no worries, but when you have problems with money, you can't talk about it. It is like a disease for them They care about your financial status more than you.

Any profession besides doctor, lawyer, or entrepreneur is looked down upon and has very little *abroo*. *Abroo* also extends to children and the family dynamic. Persians pretend to live an ideal life of peace and harmony. They hide all family issues and hardly ever seek help. Even with large-scale issues, they pretend there is no relational, emotional, or financial problem. Yas says:

When you are in that community, you have to be very superficial. You have to wear a certain outfit, you have to talk a certain way, and you have to act a certain way. You are not supposed to talk about your problems. You are not supposed to feel low.

As a result of not expressing herself or giving a voice to her feelings, she is depressed much of the time. Her voice is mute. She also experiences psychosomatic pains, such as backache and headaches, and she suffers from a lack of concentration. Yas says:

I care about how I feel when I am with someone, how this person makes me feel, how can I talk to them and not feel bad about myself, and not be penalized because I am saying the truth. If you talk the truth to them, you lose points with them, you lose credibility, and this is very difficult. You have to maintain a certain image for everything and everyone, even for your own kids. When I go to meetings in school, and kids have drug problems, or any problems, we are supposed to hide everything and not admit that there is a problem. You have to be perfect for the community.

This secrecy and muteness of voice also extends to the therapy room. Yas remarks that, like many Persians, she withholds information from her therapist out of fear that her secrets will be disclosed and her *abroo* will be destroyed. Yas states that “you don’t want to be friends with somebody who one day is up, one day is down; you don’t want to be with someone who is not happy.” Yas feels that these pressures have squashed the little confidence and self-esteem she had.

Yas has tried to strengthen her Me by writing in her journal, and by e-mailing. By e-mailing, she avoided holding eye contact and she felt safe. Her way of rebelling and expressing herself is through the clothes she wears. But what she feels really helped her build self-esteem was her decision to work part-time.

When I started to go to work, a little piece of me started to reappear, but when that Me started to reappear, the fights began. That is why every time the Me wants to come back, it costs me so much . . . my biggest hope is that I will be able to keep a little of Me again, so that I can start to live and enjoy life. I am like a candle that has never been lit.

Her hope is that the next generation of women and children will have more confidence to stand up for their rights. She sees a tide of upheaval in her community, where women are

working and studying and becoming financially independent. She hopes that she and others can fortify their own beings, by doing what they like, by giving up on taking care of their husbands and their extended families.

Portrait 4.

The themes identified for this portrait are:

- ❖ Prince syndrome. Women love their sons more than their daughters.
- ❖ Both genders maintain and transmit patriarchal values from generation to generation.
- ❖ Men dominate and discriminate against women.
- ❖ Gender inequality: feminine power dismissed; men have more privileges.
- ❖ Exceptional father: open-minded, emphasized education and free expression.
- ❖ Exceptional self: exceptional strength and self esteem and fought *abroo* all her life.
- ❖ Powerful voice, gendered language.
- ❖ Male dominance and verbal abuse.
- ❖ Sexual repression.
- ❖ Women are more powerful than men; she feels more powerful.

Maryam

I have had few experiences with very civilized, intellectual guys in my life. Around those people, I become so feminine, with such a strong sense of humor and a feminine touch. One of them told me, “Your vocabulary is a feminine vocabulary, civilized, educated, and soft.” The feminine language is the language that I express myself with. The feminine language is a safe, civilized, soft one, that you feel secure and well respected with. It is the language of trust; it is used when you trust a man. The other language is to protect, to defend, and set the boundaries with guys. It is a harsher, more offensive language. I call it my masculine language. It is a language that you don’t feel safe with. It is the language that is used when you don’t trust a man.

Maryam was raised in a family where boys and girls were treated equally. Boys and girls were given the same educational opportunities, and daily chores were divided equally between them. Maryam's father and uncle were educated in German schools, and were also taught French. Education for women was of the utmost importance for Maryam's parents. Maryam's father was liberal, and his valuing of education was reflected in how he negotiated his daughters' *mehrieh*. There is a custom of giving *mehrieh* in Iran, where, upon marriage, the groom promises something of worth (an amount of money or coins or real estate) as a security deposit for his future wife. In case of divorce, he has to give her *mehrieh*. Maryam's father did not ask for a *mehrieh* for his daughter, but he had three conditions for marriage; that his daughter would retain the freedom of further education, the freedom to work, and the right to divorce.

Maryam's father was a fervent defender of education for women in the family. When Maryam's uncle forbade her aunts from attending school with the force of a gun, Maryam's father intervened immediately. He took over custody of his sisters, and sent them back to school. Today, when Maryam's aunts read such poets as Hafez and Sady, they bless her father for this bliss.

Maryam's teen years coincided with the time when Iran's social laws were changing in favor of women. The influence of modernity and the liberal culture on her family cemented Maryam's core with strength and courage. In addition, one of her grandmothers contributed to her self-esteem. Maryam was loved and admired by her grandmother, and this grandmother always repeated that Maryam was the apple of her eye, calling her "*naveh vaziram*," or "my minister grandchild." *Vazir*, minister, is someone of high intelligence and wisdom.

Maryam's high self-esteem guided her through life, before and after the revolution. Iran was in the process of change; it was moving toward modernity and equal rights for women. However, the old culture of patriarchy was still alive and well.

Maryam states:

The collective unconscious of a nation and the cultural/historical *rosobat* (deposit) is not something that can be changed with social laws. The deeply layered unconscious and conscious experiences of centuries of patriarchal rule have remained with us.

Maryam describes the remnants of patriarchy on her psyche through a dream, as well as through examples of discrimination that she encountered during her life. In her dream, Maryam saw her grandmother giving a new suitcase with new slippers to her male cousins. Her grandmother gave Maryam an old suitcase with torn slippers. As for real-life experiences, Maryam was aware of how her grandmother favored the boys in the family by giving them a bigger portion of cheese and bread, and also by always serving the boys the best part of the watermelon. Another incident that delineated gender differences for her was when her grandfather expressed elation upon learning that Maryam's mother had given birth to a boy rather than a girl. Maryam's grandfather was so happy that he kissed the ground in a sign of appreciation. This behavior figures prominently in her memory of childhood.

As a young girl, patriarchy limited Maryam's activities. She was not allowed to ride horses or do what boys did. Yet she was one of the few ladies who participated in the army, and received the status of a *Sotfan*, or General. She is seen by men as not very feminine, but rather as strong and straightforward. She has developed her intellectual muscle.

Her negative childhood experiences accompanied her into adulthood, and when she was 22 she decided to seek professional help. She was working on her PhD at the time, and was struck by the power of certain childhood memories. She said that although her parents were not openly discriminatory against girls, or in favor of boys, she could feel it in the air.

After graduating from university, she became chair of the psychology department, at the age of 29. She was warned not to make waves, and to act accordingly, even though she was in a position of power. She was eventually dismissed from her position with the excuse that she was not wearing the *hejab* and praying five times a day. She says, “men fought me on many fronts. They had ganged up against me before the revolution, and during the revolution the same men found the opportunity to push me and other women aside.”

She was labeled as a whore and humiliated by the revolutionary guards, because she participated in humanitarian events. Her helplessness made her dream of power.

Today Maryam lives in Washington DC, and has a very successful practice. She takes pride in her strong personality, her perseverance, and her fearlessness. She says she has ignored the culture of *abroo*, and she has never lived under any pretense. *Abroo*, in her opinion, chokes women and forces them into passivity. It makes women fearful of men and isolated. She feels that among Persian women, *abroo* and the social conditioning that accompanies it often result in depression, anxiety, self-hatred, and hypervigilant narcissism.

She has been married for 40 years. Except in the sexual arena, Maryam has been able to express herself in most realms. For instance, she has no problem engaging men in

conversations regarding politics and the economy. She says that she does not care for the small talk that often constitutes women's conversations. She remarks, "I am a philosophical thinker and I have determination. I express myself freely, except sexually." This is an interesting notion, because despite her education and eloquence, Maryam was brought up to shun her own body, and with it her budding sexuality. As she entered puberty, she hid her breasts when playing in public. Like most Persian women, she was uncomfortable with her sexuality.

In her opinion, Persian women suffer from not valuing themselves, because they do not receive much validation from family or the Persian community in general. To combat this phenomenon, she created a new course to empower women. She maintains that discrimination is a universal in Persian society, but that it is heightened by Sharia law. Sharia informs many aspects of Persian family law, including inheritance and divorce.

Today, Maryam feels more powerful than men. Her perception of men is that they are nothing but "vulnerable, stuffed tigers that cannot bite."

Portrait 5.

The themes identified for this portrait are:

- ❖ Societal pressure in the form of *abroo*.
- ❖ Male dominance and verbal abuse.
- ❖ Psychological problems (low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and shame).
- ❖ Gender inequality; boys have more privileges.
- ❖ Prince syndrome: women love their sons more than their daughters.

- ❖ Both genders maintain and transmit patriarchal values from generation to generation.
- ❖ Sexual suppression.
- ❖ Tomboy complex.
- ❖ Madonna-whore complex.
- ❖ Women as appendages to men.
- ❖ Women as chattel.
- ❖ Patriarchy dismisses the feminine and devalues women.
- ❖ Martyrdom; patriarchy is internalized.
- ❖ Women are property of men.
- ❖ Today she is a liberated woman and connected to her spiritual heart.

Lily

Outside I wore different masks, the mask of the rebellious teenager who was defiant and subversive against an authoritarian regime. My parents felt that they need to get me out of Iran for my own safety. Little did I know that patriarchy followed me even to the West, where I married a traditional man. I wore the mask of a married woman, because I wanted to please my parents. These are all my outside masks. Inside, I was strong the whole time. I held to my core, to my spiritual heart by the grace of God.

Lily was a young girl in 1979 when the Islamic Revolution took place. Through readings of Ali Shariati, she gained an awareness of the disparity that existed between males and females in Iran. She herself experienced this lack of equality between the genders. She describes Shariati's writings as the catalyst for an eye-opening epiphany, saying "I felt—wow—somebody understands that men and women are equal, because I sure enough didn't feel that I had the same opportunities, or the same privileges extended to me as a male counterpart in school." After the Revolution, boys and girls were

separated in all walks of life, beginning with school. Girls were forced to wear the black *hejab*, or headscarf, and the Muslim ideals of modesty were harshly enforced.

Gender differences and discrimination played a big role in shaping Lily's self-esteem. No matter how good and bright she was, she always felt lesser than the boys around her. Today she has a PhD, but she does not feel equal to her former male classmates. Lily states that "there was this double standard, a sense that you always had to make sure you are as good as a boy who is next to you, in accomplishment and achievement."

Lily remarks that women are not seen for who they really are, stating, "I interpret this phenomenon as being a female." This dichotomy objectifies women. Females are seen as sex objects or as pretty little girls. Lily was never seen for her intellect; she was a cute object that everybody wanted to dress her up, or arrange her hair. Lily notes, "For me, it was hard." As a result, she adopted the identity of a rebel tomboy. She did boyish things, dressed like boys, and wore her hair in a tight ponytail. She said she felt "shielded."

In 1979, the mullahs established their authoritarian rule based on an austere interpretation of Sharia law. The attitude toward women, and the repression of women, became worse. Women were further subjugated and treated like second-class citizens. Ironically Lily, who had identified as a tomboy and a rebel, became a devout and committed Muslim. She believed in covering herself, and felt the *hejab* was a protection against any kind of violation of her body. Part of this was due to trauma Lily experienced at the age of 9. Her uncle molested her. Afterwards, she felt defective and impure, no longer marriage material. The *hejab* made her feel safe and secure. Despite coming from

a secular family, no one recognized Lily's embrace of the *hejab* as a cry for help, and she continued to suffer in silence.

In Iran, Lily notes that women's bodies were seen as objects, useful for seduction as well as reproduction. Lily herself was seen as a sexual object. She felt guilty and ashamed of being perceived as such, and the *hejab* made her feel good. It was another way of hiding her femininity. It gave Lily a separate identity from men, which was important to her, as she always felt like an extension or an appendage of the men in her society.

Lily stopped wearing the *hejab* in America. But she found that Persian culture remained patriarchal and oppressive. Women were afraid to date, out of fear of being judged and labeled as loose women. Lily remarks that sex and love are separate in the Persian patriarchal system. Sex remains the domain of whores, and love is kept for marriage. According to Lily:

It is accepted for men to have sexual feelings and urges and to act upon them. Women, on the other hand, are encouraged to hide their sexuality, and women are completely encouraged to be dormant and docile. I was not allowed to date, not only in high school but also in college. I was 20-something, going to college in America, and still I could not tell my mom—who is supposed to be the closest person to me—that I liked a boy in my class I guess that you could say, you can take a girl out of Iran, but you can't take Iran out of a girl.

Lily has a unique point of view on modernism, specifically the contradiction of being a slave in modern times, something she feels many Persian women experience yet hardly realize. She used this analogy to describe the situation: "These women are almost like fish in water. The fish can't know the water, because the water is everywhere . . . how are you going to know anything about anything, until you are taken out of the water?"

Martyrdom is a common characteristic in Iranian women. This ancient idea glorifies the sacrificing of oneself at the expense of everything else, at the expense of one's voice, and at the expense of one's human desires and wishes. Lily feels that her mother's life is an example of Persian martyrdom, noting:

My mother has sacrificed her life for her husband. She married my father because she was 16 and she had to get out of the house. She married my dad for the sake of her father, and then she moved to the States for the sake of my brother.

The practice continued beyond the borders of Iran and into the United States. Her mother felt that Lily's brother was in danger of being taken to war and dying. In one way or another, Lily believes that a "Persian martyr finds a way to sacrifice herself for the other, and the other is usually a male figure. It is very ingrained in the psyche of the Persian woman—or the Middle Eastern woman—to be a martyr."

Lily experienced great fear at the hands of patriarchy. She states that the fear is deep seated, that "it is my cellular memory and in my unconscious." Under the patriarchal system, it is hard for her to have an authentic voice. Lily mentions that "even now, I remember . . . writing my dissertation, I was debating whether the topic was going to get me in trouble with the Persian government." Thus, she is very cautious about what she writes.

Lily also believes that her views about marriage and relationships could be very threatening to the establishment. She remarks "women are still men's property." The mullahs do not want to hear about feminism, or equality of women, or human rights. Lily remained mute in Iran, and was not able to be part of any women's rights clubs. She describes a common Persian response to strong women:

It is like this invisible frown you get as a woman, if you are intelligent, and you have something to say . . . you are going to get a frown and statements such as

“what is this crazy talk? A woman’s place is in the kitchen, barefoot and pregnant” . . . I am not exaggerating.

Lily nevertheless expresses herself through her writings and her choice of intimate relationships. Lily holds, “for me, to authentically express my voice is a solitary road and a courageous path.”

Lily sees all the values of the patriarchal system being transplanted whenever Persians find themselves within diasporas. In a diaspora herself, she continues to write and refuses to be a martyr, like so many who came before her. She blames several ideas embedded in Iranian culture for this situation. But she thinks that it is mainly *abroo*, “shame, and self-image” that are intertwined. Divorce is considered a failure, and with failure comes shame and loss of *abroo*. She claims that she did not keep her *abroo*, by divorcing her husband and embracing Jesus. She feels like an outcast in her community.

However, she also feels she lived a fake existence for a long time in order to uphold the image of *abroo* for her family. Yet she was able to regain some of her *abroo* by proving that she was a virgin upon marriage. She was falsely accused by her husband of not being a virgin. Her medical records proved that she was not touched before marriage. She states that she felt she was emotionally raped by her husband, and yet in this system the victim is blamed.

According to Lily, women play a large role in perpetuating patriarchy and protecting the status quo. She notes that her mother-in-law was totally domineering and glorified her son. Lily says she got out of the marriage because “I was not willing to sacrifice my soul and my authenticity for status.”

After her tumultuous teenage years, Lily sought solace by searching for equality in the Koran. She was very disappointed to find that the Koran takes away the power of

women, and makes them subservient. A verse stating that men are the keepers of women stood out to her in particular. Lily concluded that she had to remain helpless and put her destiny in the hands of men.

Throughout her hardships, Lily has held true to her core. She calls her core the beloved. The beloved has enabled her to navigate through life and find an authentic voice. She describes being “connected to the core . . . to the source of my spiritual heart . . . the connection gave me strength.” Lily remarks, “Sexuality is an area where I am very Westernized and open . . . my sexual freedom is threatening to men, but to me is liberating and empowering.”

Today she is a liberated woman, one who does not believe in the Cinderella myth of needing a man to save her from the dungeon. She is an equal, and seeks an equal relationship.

Portrait 6.

The themes identified for this portrait are:

- ❖ Societal pressure in the form of *abroo*.
- ❖ Male dominance, verbal and emotional abuse.
- ❖ Psychological problems (low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression).
- ❖ Both genders maintain and transmit patriarchal values from generation to generation.
- ❖ Loss of voice.
- ❖ Sexual repression, madonna-whore complex.
- ❖ Women objectified.
- ❖ Little Prince Syndrome (the culture of valuing boys over girls).

- ❖ Voice repressed during marriage; positive correlation between financial independence, high self-esteem and a solid voice.
- ❖ Exceptional supporting father.
- ❖ European boyfriend treated her like a queen.

Laleh

I chose this man as a husband, because he was very popular amongst the girls in my town, and I wanted to be ahead of all my friends. I wanted to be seen with the most popular man. It was only later on that I realized that external beauty, or physical beauty, amounts to nothing; it does not put food or salad on the table. When I turned 20, I realized I shared my bed with a man who has absolutely nothing in common with me.

From the beginning of her marriage, she was considered a defect by her husband and his family, because she had failed to become pregnant immediately. Her in-laws were panicking and taking her to all kind of doctors. In Iran, women are valued by their capacity to give birth, especially to boys.

Upon Laleh's marriage, she was chattel; her father gave a substantial dowry and paid for all her expenses. Yet her husband was not a provider and never wanted to spend money on her. He was physically and emotionally absent. He was a womanizer and a gambler, and she held no value for him. Her role was to clean, cook, and take care of children. He treated her like a *kohneh*, a dirty old cloth that one uses as a mat or throws away.

Her husband was always absent and in love with other women, neglecting his wife and children when they were sick and in need. Every time he fell in love, he would stop talking to her, stop touching her, and ask to be left alone. He would brag about his affairs, in order to kill her soul and degrade her. Laleh says that "when you have a husband that constantly tells you that he is in love with another woman, and you love

him, obviously you will feel *pajmordeh* (wilting). You begin to detest yourself.” Laleh remains certain that “my husband wanted me to feel low; that is why he revealed his affairs.” Some of his affairs even took place in their home, with Laleh’s friends. He would put Laleh to sleep with sleeping pills, and then have his way with the other woman. This emotional abuse from her husband crushed her self-confidence and self-esteem. She was depressed; she cried a lot and always had anxiety.

She worked, and essentially raised her kids alone. The love and support of her father sustained her and built her self-esteem. From childhood, her father esteemed her highly and showered her with love. She recovered her self-esteem and confidence when a circle of influential Persians close to the Shah adopted her. Her work developed, her self-esteem improved, and her voice grew. Before these positive developments, she was practically a mute, a woman who was easily dismissed and without a voice.

Then she began to express herself by helping others, as well as through her work. She became very influential in Iran. Ministers trusted her, and her business blossomed. She elevated herself and her self-esteem by becoming successful, by wearing nice clothes, and by becoming refined. Working with men changed her language, her way of being in the world. Her work experience made her more similar to men; she embraced the masculine, and gradually felt more comfortable in the world of men.

Because of holding *abroo* for herself, her parents, her children, and her grandchildren, she refrained from living her life to the fullest and experiencing love. She hid her lover from everyone for years, and never married him. Her hidden boyfriend was the love of her life, a man who called her the only rose in the universe. Unfortunately, he passed away after 5 years.

Afraid of judgment, Laleh never dated again. She suppressed her sexuality. She didn't want to be labeled as a whore or loose woman. Regrettably, many men in her culture look at divorced women as miserable whores. Laleh controlled her behavior in social settings, and dressed conservatively in order to portray a perfect image to society.

Her daughter has married a husband with the same personality traits as her father. He is an alcoholic. Even though her daughter was raised in the U.S., Laleh sadly states that, because she had an absent father, her daughter has a low amount of confidence, and has not been able to work or save for herself.

Laleh remains a hard worker. Even though she has been shunned by some of her friends for being a single woman who keeps her head high, Laleh keeps working to support her grandchildren and help her daughter.

Portrait 7.

The themes identified for this portrait are:

- ❖ Societal Pressure in the form of *abroo*; perfect image.
- ❖ Male dominance: molded to every one's expectations.
- ❖ Psychological problems (low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression).
- ❖ Both genders maintain and transmit patriarchal values from generation to generation.
- ❖ Loss of voice.
- ❖ Madonna-whore complex; sexual repression.
- ❖ Women objectified/men are narcissists.
- ❖ Little Prince Syndrome (the culture of valuing boys over girls).
- ❖ Perfect image of *kanoum*.

- ❖ Exceptional father.
- ❖ Enmeshment between mother and son.
- ❖ Roles of women are limited to dutiful daughters, wives, and mothers.
- ❖ Persian culture has its richness.

Rose

Yet, there is constant pressure to always being perfect, talking perfect, walking perfect, acting perfect, dressing perfect . . . to wear hair and make-up perfect. I am getting angry. I am told not to reveal myself too much in public and to act the right way on dates. There is so much pressure to be quiet, say less, and make men feel comfortable. Hey, you have to *gooz*, “fart,” perfectly too.

Living under both societal and family pressure, Rose was forced to live up to everyone else’s expectations, and portray the perfect image of *kanoum*, the true Persian lady. The arduous task of always appearing, feeling, and acting perfect has muted her voice, and constricted her freedom. This pressure of always being perfect has thwarted her growth and her ability to be herself. She has become rigid.

Most of her decisions, ranging from where she works to what career she should ultimately hold, are shaped by what her parents and society expect of her. Everything from the way she dresses to the way she talks is scrutinized by society, and especially by her mother. She states that when she wears a revealing skirt, her mother covers it. Her mother even controls her speech in public, by commenting on how to speak and what is appropriate to say. She is not allowed to laugh out loud, because it is unacceptable for her to show her gums to others. Rose, who is naturally expressive, feels that she needs to censure herself. She finds it very confining to hide her feelings and expressions, but feels that she must do so because they are not acceptable in her culture.

To be a lady, one must be modest. Modesty is considered a virtue in the Persian culture. Thus, even when playing the piano, Rose has to be careful that she does not appear to be showing off.

She has been taught that a lady is strong and not emotional. As a result, she feels torn between being confident and shy. Out of fear of being labeled a failure, being considered un-ladylike, Rose is never spontaneous; she will never joke in public or gaze into a man's eyes. For Rose, connecting with men during dates is an anxiety-riddled process, because she never allows herself to enjoy the moment.

To be ladylike, Rose has to be the perfect housewife, mother, and lover. She is told that she needs to "cater and feed the ego of men." Rose states that the patriarchal Persian system instills a terror of sex in girls, yet expects women to be "porn stars" in bed. Rose remarks that women have to always look good, smell good, and be ladylike in society, but be unabashedly sexual in the bedroom. For Rose, who is naturally sexual, sex and shame have become intertwined. She has been trained to stifle her sexual feelings and expressions. She remarks that she was raised with old, rigid values from the past. She is caught between the old views of valuing women for their virginity and new views of the younger generation. She states that you have to fit in the mold:

Back in the day, virginity, seriousness, and morals were valued. A quiet woman was valued; a family-oriented woman was valued. Now it is all about tits and ass. It is all Pamela Anderson and fitting into that mold. Persian guys don't want a good girl. They will never go for a girl who is a virgin.

Rose remarks that boys are now very "looks-oriented." They demand perfection in everything, from the appearance of a woman, to her profession and sexual expertise. She claims that boys are spoiled, lost, confused, flamboyant, and competitive. They have

high expectations of women, and in a party they flock towards the most perfect-looking, most popular girl. She feels that Persian men are narcissists.

Rose thinks she is perceived by some as sexy and by others as classy. She is caught between the two images, not sure which role or perception is her own. She feels that when men get to know her, their perception changes, and she is perceived as an intelligent, down-to-earth “good girl.”

Rose attributes the arrogance of Persian boys to the way they are praised and cherished by their mother. Boundaries are loose between mothers and sons, and this causes a lot of problems for the sons’ wives. She also believes there is a double-standard in Persian dating; Persian boys are encouraged to date early and have sex with women, in order to become men and spill their seed. The same advice is never given to girls.

Rose believes that the culture of *abroo* prevents Persian women from tasting life and living in the moment. She states, “Persian culture is about the past and the future, and in the present we don’t seize the moment.” She feels that people are preoccupied about what others think, and many go into debt in order to portray an image of perfection and success to the world. She believes that the culture of *abroo* changes one’s perception, and makes them look at the world with a black-and-white lens.

Psychologically, the culture of *abroo* has lowered her self-esteem. It has created shame, guilt, insecurity, anger, and anxiety in her.

Rose is deeply afraid that she will not get married and have children. She finds solace in writing, dancing, and doing friendship therapy. She also enjoys playing the piano.

Regardless of the shortcomings of her culture, Rose is happy to be raised in the Persian culture. She appreciates certain aspects of its richness. She feels that the Persian Jews are very family-oriented, and there is so much beauty and connection in that tradition. She also realizes that she cannot change her society and her culture. She has decided to live her life according to her own truth. She wants to be happy.

Portrait 8.

The themes identified for this portrait are:

- ❖ Societal pressure in the form of *abroo*.
- ❖ Male dominance: no freedom of expression, emotional life is silent.
- ❖ Women with power receive no validation.
- ❖ Limited roles for women: wives, mothers, no alternate role models.
- ❖ Psychological problems (low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and paranoia).
- ❖ Patriarchy is maintained by everyone in the Persian community.
- ❖ Patriarchy is transmitted across generations.
- ❖ Herd mentality.
- ❖ Loss of voice.
- ❖ Victim syndrome.
- ❖ Prince Syndrome: boys are valued more than girls.
- ❖ Sexual dysfunction.
- ❖ Women are financially dependent.
- ❖ Patriarchy is fear based, power based, shapes woman into victims, and inspires aggression.
- ❖ Penis envy: I pissed like boys.

- ❖ I want to be a man's equal.

White Water Lily

Sartre says that without society's eyes upon you, you won't become conscious of yourself. It is through the gaze of the other that you learn about yourself. You can spit on the street and not think anything about it, but if some one looks at you oddly then, you develop shame. The way you see yourself is through the other.

Patriarchy is ingrained in the Persian psyche; it is blood in the veins of men, women, and children. Women, as well as men, are carriers of patriarchy, and they all perpetuate the system. Patriarchy is self-inflicted among women, because they don't work to become independent. Patriarchy has external and internal components.

Externally, there are no role models of independent women to emulate; patriarchy robs women of their power and makes them victims. Women are not empowered; they are encouraged to maintain their old roles. Women fall in a vicious circle of victimization ever perpetuating itself. The internal/psychological aspect of patriarchy affects self-confidence and mental abilities. It is fear based.

Patriarchy does not validate the power of women, and it discourages risk-taking. As the new generation of Persian girls follows hierarchical professions, they are not inventive; you hardly see any entrepreneurs among them. My cousins live and breathe for marriage; they are desperate for it. Change is difficult and burdensome. Those who remove themselves from the old system become outcasts.

Personally, I was not raised in a patriarchal household. My mom is a feminist. My father is a complete vegetable. He has no access to his feelings.

Patriarchy dismisses the voice. My cousins complain that no one listens to them at the dinner table, because they are young and not married. As for me, I have developed two voices, the pleaser voice and the baby voice. Growing up, my role was to make my

parents happy, and because my father was emotionally unavailable, I tried to please men in order to get attention and love. The baby voice protects me from angry people, because I believe babies are loved unconditionally, and so no one can get mad at me when I use this voice.

As a result, I have developed a false self, and I am not in touch with my true self. Part of myself is numb. The loss of voice creates anxiety for me, and my anxiety is fear-based. I have phobias of STDs and obsessive-compulsive disorders. I am also paranoid at times. Depression makes me sleepy, and my system completely shuts down.

When I feel down or shitty, I don't share it with people; I pretend everything is fine. My presentation in my community is crucial. It is my *abroo*. *Abroo* . . . the way we speak, act, and dress. *Abroo* descends from our parents. You begin to take a certain persona, and part of your brain starts believing it, because it is repetitive, anything that is repetitive goes into the subconscious. The persona you take becomes your reality.

I can't publicly say I have a boyfriend; I can't even be seen with him in public. Persian girls hide their boyfriends. Having a boyfriend, on top of it an Asian boyfriend, will destroy my image in the community. I would be labeled a whore. So I keep quiet. Under patriarchy, the less people know the better. I understand that "everybody has a little *abroo*, it creates social norms, but Persians are obsessive about *abroo*. Instead of you dictating *abroo*, *abroo* dictates to you."

My sexuality has been affected by patriarchy. I have become sexually aggressive; I like to tease guys, it is my power complex. As a child, I had penis envy. I felt accomplished peeing like a guy, I tried to piss like guys and I thought it was cool. It was also convenient and didn't require an effort to sit down. I feel like men are jellyfish, they are spineless, and demented. I don't think they are very intelligent, and they are so into their mothers. I feel they are dumb, and think everything revolves around their dick.

I want to be a man's equal, and I believe the only way I will feel equal is to be as successful as they are.

Portrait 9.

The themes identified for this portrait are:

- ❖ Both genders maintain and transmit patriarchal values from generation to generation.
- ❖ Societal pressure in the form of *abroo*.
- ❖ Male dominance: culture of intimidation, breeds violence.
- ❖ Gender inequality: women are slaves without rights, they are invisible and supports the *zaifeh* syndrome.
- ❖ Psychological problems (animal-like caginess, traumatization and psychosomatic complaints, and anxiety).
- ❖ The *persaram*, sons' culture, the Prince Syndrome.
- ❖ Reject traditional roles of women; in her family men and women are equal.
- ❖ Women are not validated; *kanoum* culture.
- ❖ She is outspoken, sexually free, strong, and believes in the power of woman.

Etesami

I don't believe in marriage. I am never going to have kids. I want to be with my boyfriend 'til the day I die. I just don't believe in women having to sign their lives away, change their last names and become somebody's slave, or *bardeh*. I have always had issues with that since I was a kid. So I am never going to marry, and I will never have kids. I believe in creating stuff, and I create stuff all the time. I just do it differently, and I am proud of other people for doing it their way. There is no one way; I have many ways that I create, and I do show those ways. I send little girls in Iran to art classes. That is my mission, to bring them to the world. I will turn them into artists. I have my own mission.

Outgoing and open, Etesami was born in Tehran during the 8-year war with Iraq. Although most of the fighting took place in the southern section of the Islamic Republic, the war took the lives of hundreds of thousands of young Iranian men from every region of the country. Etesami lived in Iran till she was in third grade and continues to visit her close relatives in Iran, traveling to the country once or twice a year. She grew up in a family of artists, an only child, and had a very supportive grandfather whom she adored. She remembers attending a lot of funerals, as the casualties from the war rose with each year. She relates, “I grew up attending funerals, but it wasn’t a sad thing for me. I was a kid and I thought everybody grew up attending funerals.”

Her parents made a concerted effort to raise Etesami as a modern Iranian girl, one who would not be submissive but rather educated, articulate, and confident. At an early age, she demonstrated artistic talent, and was even allowed to take karate lessons in Tehran. She says she got her zest for life and ability to survive from the males in her family, who taught her how to fight.

Etesami was beaten in school by Shia fundamentalist teachers, all of whom were women. In her opinion, all of them were fervent believers in all that Ayatollah Khomeini espoused, particularly concerning women and their place within Iranian society and the home. According to her, these instructors “enforced the sick fantasy of patriarchy through the books with Khomeini’s face.” She thinks that in her culture, it is the mothers the daughters and sisters who have a lot of influence on the males growing up. She thinks that they spread the seeds of patriarchy. She also explains that traditional Persian culture favors boys. Yet in Etesami’s family, things were always different. She says, “Women were praised and seen as activists, movers, and thinkers in my family.”

Art has remained the major avenue through which Etesami has been able to express herself as an individual. She has curated several important museum exhibitions; she was among the few Iranian women afforded this privilege. She describes how business is conducted in Iran, stating that “everything is done with a look in the eye and a handshake, but if you are a girl, no one looks at you, and no one touches you.”

Her experiences in Iran have been quite challenging, but have slowly grown more positive since her initial show, in which she did not get to take credit for the work she had done. She describes “a complete wall” for females connected to this event, meaning that the women were denied basic artistic rights. The credit for the show went to men whom she hardly knew until the day of the show’s opening. One of the men who took credit for her art also took her new Apple computer. Her mother advised her that if she wanted the exhibition to take place, she needed to hand him her Apple computer as a bribe. In Iran, people in power can do anything.

Once, while Etesami was curating at MOCA Tehran, a modern and contemporary museum built by the Shah’s wife Farrah prior to the Revolution, guests were not able to comment on a work which referenced some of the social issues affecting Iran, such as the fact that the “highest exports of Iran are women and girls who are kidnapped and sold to Arab countries” and that “AIDS is an epidemic in Iran, but we are not allowed to talk about it.” Etesami says she has to distance herself from some of the contradictions she sees when she visits Iran, remarking, “I just hang with my mom’s family, because my father’s family is very patriarchal. It is the boy thing I can’t deal with, and in that area my mom is not a typical Muslim woman.” Her mother teaches children about Jesus and other religions, and even celebrates ancient Zoroastrian holidays.

On one of her most recent trips to Iran, which took place during the unrest following the 2009 presidential election, Etesami was arrested, interrogated blindfolded, threatened, and was scared. She was with her boyfriend when the revolutionary guards attacked their car out of nowhere, and took them both away. She states that it was the scariest experience of her life, and she was traumatized as a result. During her arrest and interrogation, she acted docile, looked down, and lied. She told them that she had come to Iran to become a more devout Moslem, and to convert her boyfriend to Islam, so that they can together make a dozen boys and name them after the prophets. She didn't think she was going to make it out of the Islamic Republic alive. For weeks after this trauma, she was hiding in her aunt's closet and she could not move her jaw.

One trauma led to another. After her release, Etesami was forced to leave the house with her mother, and randomly some men on motorcycles drove by and smacked her from behind. "I didn't actually fall on the pavement," she said. "I almost did. I remember thinking the ground was hurtling towards my face. Actually, it's really funny that at no point did I think I was falling; I thought the ground was falling up towards my face, 'til I caught my self in mid-air and realized I was screaming." She began yelling, and the neighbors poured out, not to help her but to tell her that it is not ladylike to yell in the streets. Despite all of the abuse she experienced, she did not give up on her goals and her commitment to her nation. She says, "I have other ways that I create . . . I am fond of sending little girls in Iran to art classes. That is my mission, to bring them to the world."

Although *abroo* has been part of her life, she feels she has had certain advantages, because her parents were artists and open to alternative views. She also points out, "I just

don't give up. I have something to say, and I scream it out until it sticks to something.”

She argues:

We are the ones that give them (the men) that power, with the whole *abroo*. We Persian women have to have 10 different passports, so we can't be ourselves. We have to be 10 different people to different people, and I think that is tiring.

In her case, Etesami's parents always encouraged her to be herself.

Etesami claims to suffer from anxiety, which she says came from her grandmother. She states, “my anxiety is really high and I have panic attacks. I think it is related to moving, being born during the war, just everything, everything that made me who I am.” Art is a therapeutic venue for Etesami. She states that she is a “vessel” and that her hands are her medium of self-expression. She likes to get her hands on everything she can, on every color, texture, and material.

Although Etesami is in a serious relationship that has lasted over 10 years, she is against marriage. In her early years, before meeting her boyfriend, she was a lesbian.

Now, when discussing her current relationship with her boyfriend, she states:

We are really good at being in the same room . . . it is calming and nice knowing he is around, and he does not have to do anything except be himself, and I love him. Honestly, he could be a goat and I would love him.

Etesami states that Persian mothers put their sons on an illusionary pedestal, and the boys perpetuate this illusion to feel like men. Power and the sense of superiority feed their egos and make them more aggressive. Etesami concludes that, “like me when I needed to bite someone to feel power, they need to bite someone to feel that they have power over them.”

However, she remains a staunch believer in the power of women. She feels that there are many women complicit in the preaching of patriarchy. According to Etesami,

perpetuating this myth of patriarchy only makes men more powerful. She believes that women have the opportunity to turn things around, by influencing the youth and ending the oppression of female subordination.

Composite Portrait: Pooneh

Pooneh is a composite profile based on the 9 Persian women interviewed for this study. Though she is fictional, Pooneh exhibits many of the more pronounced symptoms that participants 1-9 possessed. Her life and background were also based on the same interviews.

The common themes discovered in all nine portraits are:

- ❖ Societal pressure in the form of *abroo*.
- ❖ Male dominance and verbal abuse.
- ❖ Psychological problems (low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression).
- ❖ Suppressed sexuality.
- ❖ Patriarchy encourages docility, *kanum*, and a lady-like attitude.
- ❖ Prince Syndrome.
- ❖ Both genders maintain and transmit patriarchal values from generation to generation.
- ❖ Loss of voice: emotional voice is silent, no freedom of expression.
- ❖ Self-expression through art.

Pooneh was born in Tehran shortly before the Islamic Revolution. The end of 1970 coincides with the blossoming of Iran's economy. Iran was rising fast on the world scene, and was considered a rich country. Iranians were living comfortably, and the gap

between poor and rich had shrunk tremendously. The economic boost was not followed with a political development. Instead, Iran remained a stable monarchy.

In public, Iran's laws were changing in favor of women, but in private homes across the country, the patriarchal values were intact and obeyed. Persian women and men now wore European clothes and shoes; their perfume had changed from rose water to European scent; and, of course, the *hejab* was removed. Yet the core of Persians remained patriarchal. Women talked and pretended that they were free and, to some extent, they were; but the remnant of patriarchy was solidly embedded in their psyches.

So, in this climate, a girl was born in a middle-class family. Her name is Pooneh. Pooneh's parents were educated and somewhat cosmopolitan in their tastes. Her father had been educated in Europe, and her mother had a degree in literature from Shiraz University; however, when it came to the running of the household, relations were very traditional. One of the reasons for this had to do with the importance of the extended family in Persian culture. Grandmothers and parents-in-law usually lived very close-by, and there were often several meals and events where the entire family came together.

Pooneh's family and her paternal grandparents were living in the same apartment complex. In their household, the roles of men and women were distinct and rigid. Pooneh's father was the breadwinner of the family, and was rising in social status. He did not want his wife to work and, even though he was not religious, he did not want her to interact with other men. After all, he had married a virgin, and his possession was dear and valuable. So, Pooneh's mother was a housewife in charge of the daily domestic chores.

Pooneh's father was the oldest son of the family, and the entire family felt an *arezoo* (extreme wish) for a baby boy. Pooneh's mother had become pregnant immediately after the wedding night, and this was a seal that her womb was young and healthy for conceiving. For months, the extended family of both parents had prayed and performed *Nazar*, ritual supplications requesting God to grant that the child be a boy. The ritual was very public: having wished for something, you sacrifice an animal, preferably a goat or lamb, and give the meat to the poor; or you go to the shrine of Prophet Reza in Mashad, or you throw a *sofreh* (luncheon) at which women gather and pray while clergy recite from the Koran.

Pooneh's family had a lot at stake. With a male child their prestige and image would triple, and they could parade with their heads high, boasting that their daughter was a bearer of boys. Boys were prized highly in the Persian society. The ripple effects of a baby boy would determine what kind of suitors Pooneh's sisters and cousins would have; all of the family's daughters would be more marketable and could ask for more *mehrieh* (a reverse dowry from groom's family to bride's family).

Catastrophe fell on the family when it was announced that the baby was a girl. Pooneh's mother had brought shame on the whole family. Love and attention receded, and her menial labor began. Considered defective, she had to cater to her mother-in-law and cook for the whole family living in the apartment next to hers.

Pooneh grew up with a silent, emotionally absent mother who served her in-laws around the clock, and with a father who was so busy and patriarchal in nature that he did not play with his children. Pooneh experienced strict patriarchal values. She had no freedom, could never socialize with her friends outside of school, went to an all-girls

school and was always chaperoned. As Pooneh grew, her dream was to study abroad and find a way to leave her father's house. She was raised to be docile and very lady-like.

Pooneh was 16 when the Revolution happened. The family fled Iran and moved to Los Angeles. Like many Persians, Pooneh and her family found a place in Westwood and restarted their lives. However, they continued to remain very attached to their culture and their traditions. Pooneh was enrolled at college and worked part-time in a firm owned by her father's friend. Because she was bright, and her family had certain means, Pooneh began to have suitors. Her father, out of fear that she might marry an outsider, quickly moved to arrange Pooneh's marriage. One month later, after seeing her husband a mere five times, Pooneh wed. Her husband was affluent, and the couple moved to a house close to Sunset Boulevard. Pooneh, who was 20, was promised that she would be allowed to continue her education.

Then, the real pressure began for her. From all sides, people began to ask when she was going to have a child, and how many little princes she was planning to bring into the world. At the beginning of her marriage, her new husband was kind and understood that his young wife had no experience in the bedroom; but after several failed attempts to get his wife pregnant, he began to show disdain for her. He refused to speak to her. His mother began spreading rumors in the community about his new wife. Pooneh did not know what to do. She could not concentrate on her studies, and often had panic attacks. Every other week her mother-in-law was taking her to a new doctor. In her heart Pooneh knew that the marriage was wrong, and she wanted to split.

When Pooneh saw her mother to discuss the matter, her mother would not look her in the face. Afraid, and increasingly depressed, Pooneh found that she was becoming

an outcast in the Persian community. Before she could find a way out of the marriage, she became pregnant. Her son became her world, because only through him could she shine and get attention. She began to feel empowered, and her depression subsided. But later, when her children started to reach puberty, she felt she was just a maid to them. Her mother and her mother-in-law contributed to this feeling as they praised their grandsons and showered the boys with gifts.

Pooneh began looking for a job, though her husband tried to discourage her by demeaning her and telling her that no one would hire her. Eventually, Pooneh was able to find part-time work in the office of an Armenian lawyer, where she was adored by all. Pooneh's husband became very distant, and withdrew the little attention that he had once given her. She found out the hard way what it meant to be an Iranian wife living in Los Angeles. Socially, she was not allowed to participate in conversations with men. She had no control over their finances. Her husband would take her check and give her half of the salary.

Pooneh began to learn about her rights, and, soon, she became aware that if she divorced her husband, she would be entitled to half of their wealth. She began to dream of independence, but now her children were grown men, and they wanted to marry Persian girls from good families. A divorce would ruin their reputation in the community, and no one would want to associate with them. So Pooneh remained silent. But she started to paint, and she found out about a woman's therapy group that met once a week. Today, Pooneh is a well-known artist in the Persian community, and she has had many exhibitions in Los Angeles. She says:

My art is me, and I am my art. I release my joy, sorrow, love, hate on the canvas. On the canvas everything is blended, and life is created. With every new piece, a

new piece of me emerges. The silenced “me” speaks to the world. This is my way of connecting to the Holy one. I know that, like the autumn leaves, my best years are behind me, and I know I will always wonder what it would be like to have had a soul mate, a partner, an equal. Do you know what it is? Have you tasted it?

Then a voice in her mind tells her to stop dreaming, and she runs to the kitchen to prepare tea for her husband.

Chapter 5

Discussion of Implications

Clinical Implications

While working in various clinics during my internships, I realized that my supervisors and my fellow interns, who were working with the Persian population, knew very little about the cultural and societal norms of Iranians in diaspora. I was astonished that many lacked interest in understanding Persian culture, and did not believe that knowledge of Persian culture was a necessary prerequisite to providing good therapeutic care. My supervisors insisted that I use the same therapeutic framework on the Persian immigrant population that they were using on the fully acculturated native population. The orientation of these therapists emphasized classification and diagnosis.

I am not overlooking the importance of diagnosis when there is a neurological problem but, as licensed marriage family therapist with a Jungian orientation, I believe there is more to a person than a formula in the *DSM-IV*. I like to look at the individual in totality; I like to understand the person in geographical, social, and cultural context. By isolating and identifying salient themes in the phenomenological experience of expatriate Persian women living in Los Angeles, this study aims to provide the community of therapists with a map for navigating these cultural issues in the therapy room. It is important for counselors working with Persian clients, or indeed with any ethnic minority, to be open and explore their subcultural values, historical backgrounds, and unique conflicts.

Psychotherapy and the field of psychology is a rather novel phenomenon among the majority of Persians living in California. Persians generally turn to friends and relatives rather than seek outside counsel from therapists. Because of their tribal culture,

Persians have big extended families, so they can consult with a large pool of family elders—*Bozorghay Famil*—who are respected for their wisdom and integrity. Though occasionally a woman of exceptional age and wisdom will be accorded this status, it is usually reserved for men. These patriarchs (and occasionally matriarchs) are consulted according to their position in the hierarchy. If a couple faces marital problems, first they seek the advice of a *Bozorgh Famil* within their immediate family, such as their parents, older sisters and brothers, aunts and uncles, or in serious cases, grandparents. However, if the problems remain unresolved or even escalate, then the couple consults a trusted and well-respected religious authority. Because Persians have developed such strong feelings of loyalty toward these traditional counselors, they are reluctant to look outside the family for help or submit to therapy.

Any therapist attempting to work with the Persian community needs to be aware how much their prospective clients differ from the average American in respect to their value system and social outlook. Within Persian culture, interpersonal relationships are binary, simultaneously unfolding on the level of the exterior self (*zaher*) and the interior self (*baten*). Persians are expected to hide who they really are from the outside world behind a mask. This mask is the mask of *abroo*. The societal pressure of *abroo* splits the self into a public persona and private persona. The private persona is like Snow White in her coffin. It stays dormant and refuses to wake up, out of fear that its secret will be shared with the world. As one of participants stated, Persians have a hard time trusting therapists. They are afraid that their secrets will be unveiled and that they will lose their positive image in the community.

Therapy has a negative connotation among Persians. It inspires a sense of shame and disgrace in traditional Persians, who still hold the prejudice that therapy is reserved for the mentally retarded or psychotic. Traditional Persians are afraid that they will be labeled insane, and their image (*abroo*) will be tarnished. Furthermore, the ruined image of one person in a family has a ripple effect on that person's entire extended family, who are disgraced and humiliated. This worldview is now changing due to educational programs offered by Persian therapists. While working in a clinical setting, Persians expressed fear of being seen by friends or relatives in waiting rooms. Young girls express concern that their chance of finding a suitable husband will diminish if people find out they are in therapy. Some Persians coming through the center just want to work with Americans, because they fear a Persian therapist might reveal their secrets and breach confidentiality, tarnishing their *abroo*.

Keeping *abroo* is the most important mission in most Persians' lives. This public persona needs to remain intact at all times. As one of the participants in my study mentioned, Persians live with their public personas so long that these personas replace their authentic selves. The false self is essentially fossilized. It is a delicate and challenging task for a therapist to unpeel these layers.

Abroo becomes an obstacle in the therapy room. A Persian client tries to uphold the false image with a therapist. Wanting to shine under the gleam of the therapist's eye, Persian clients might have a hard time revealing their true selves. They imagine that exposing the true self might elicit unfavorable judgment from the therapist. Therefore, when they need to be most honest and unveil their feelings, they get stuck under the mask. They have to uphold their image and keep face.

Counselors working with the Persian community need to be cognizant of how the theme of sacrifice emerges in the field of transference. The theme of self-suppression recurs frequently in the study. Persian women have learned to put themselves last. In the therapy room, they will do the same; they will try to play the role of a dutiful daughter or wife; they will attempt to please their therapists by not burdening them with their pain. It is important to look at all the emergent and unique themes of this study to understand how Persian women navigate through patriarchal systems.

I believe group therapy would be a great medium of self-expression for Persian women because Persians are a tribal community. In a group setting, women can reveal their secrets and connect authentically. Persian women will then realize that their problems are universal and not unique to them.

Persians also come to the therapy room seeking advice and guidance. They often would rather get that advice from a *rish sefid*, an older therapist. This idealization makes it hard for client and therapist to work collaboratively on a treatment goal. In her article “Iranian Families,” Behnaz Jalali observes that “the most effective family therapy technique with Iranian families is either the structural or the strategic problem-oriented approach, possibly because the power-hierarchical orientation matches the culture. The Iranian family usually responds positively to directives and may actually request them” (Jalali, 1996, p. 362). Therapy for most Persians is short-term and solution-focused. Persians expect their therapists to tell them what is wrong with them, and then how to fix it quickly and painlessly. Most Persians disown certain aspects of their affective or emotional life. Some are simply unaware of their feelings.

However, the vital art of understanding and describing feelings, as a tool for describing the psyche, has lately become more widely appreciated in the Persian community. Depth psychotherapy is a medium of self-expression for Persians seeking help. Persians are cognizant that an emphatic, savvy psychotherapist can help them access their unconscious by focusing in on the tiniest cues of their personality. Expert analysts act as containers for their clients by being emotionally attuned to their body language, tone of voice, and general affect.

It is crucial for therapist working with the Persian population or any ethnic minority to refrain from labeling a client before assessing cultural differences, gender roles, family hierarchies, power structures, and acculturation rates. Draguns (1981) argues that therapists must simultaneously view their clients through culture-specific and culture-general lenses, so that therapists do not attribute dysfunction to individuals who are displaying behavior that is normative within their own culture; yet they also must not dismiss real dysfunction as merely symptomatic of cultural difference. J. P. Spradley (1979) compares the task of cultural therapists to that of ethnographers, who let the subjects of their study know in various ways that they are eager to understand the meaning of their existence, in all its complexity and beauty (p. 34). As cultural therapists, it is important that we widen our lens and set aside our prejudices and biases. In doing so, we can establish a stronger therapeutic bond with our clients.

Effective treatment goals must be calibrated to match a client's level of acculturation. As psychotherapists, we need to honor the cultural requirements of our clients and meet them at their level of acculturation just as surely as we meet them at their developmental stage. A Persian woman may not want to be emancipated; she may

not want to leave her tribe; she may instead want to migrate back and forth between the individualistic culture of the West and the collectivist culture of the East. The patriarchal power structure in Persian culture, whether in the home or in the larger body politic, predisposes Persian women to look upon their therapists as superior beings who know the answers and have the solutions. They wait for their therapists to save them. Therapists whose clients lacked an idealized parent (*imago*) during childhood should not initially resist their clients' tendency to idealize the therapist as a substitute parent (*imago*); however, therapists should gradually encourage their clients to stop idealizing them and view them instead as partners in their process of self-growth. Partnership empowers the client and eliminates hierarchical thinking. With this approach therapists can only help their clients along their journey of self-realization.

As partners with our Persian clients, we can start the journey of psychotherapy. We work together to personify the images, affects, and symptoms. Together, we open the channels of communication with our authentic, interior voices. As Hillman (1975) says:

Here is the space to receive the mass immigration, the resurrection of the repressed, as the Angels and Archons, Daemons and Nymphs, Powers and Substances, Virtues and Vices, released from the mental reservations that restrain such primitiveness and from the conceptual prisons of small-letter descriptions, now return to enter again into the commerce of our daily lives. (p. 42)

For Hillman, the therapy room is a guesthouse. As hosts, we should invite our clients to give voice to the multitudinous personified aspects of our selves. Persian women are in general disinclined to see themselves as an entity composed of these different parts.

As the famous Persian poet Rumi says, we need to receive every emotion that knocks on the portals of our souls and welcome it, because it might surprise us. I like to think, however, that we are both the host and the guest, both the wounded and the healer.

Limitations of the Study

The study is limited in several ways. First and foremost, the sample size is not large enough to make sweeping statements for all the Persian women living under patriarchy. Nine participants cannot be representative of a whole community. Secondly, the study is homogenous, in the sense that the participants are from a similar socio-economic background. Most are from middle-class families. Thirdly, due to a shortage of time and resources, the sample does not include Persian minorities such as the Bahais, Armanians, and Zoroastrians. The sample does not represent women from all of the different regions of Iran. Therefore, ethnic and racial factors have not been considered in this study.

The sample used in this study is a geographically specific sample done in Los Angeles and its surrounding areas. The results of this study are not applicable to Persian women living outside this area, nor does this sample represent Iranian women who live in Iran and other parts of the world. The sample excludes women from different regions of Iran. The exact ethnic breakdown of Iran is unknown, as there are no official numbers. However, some organizations have made estimates. The World Fact Book released these estimates: Persians (51%), Azerbaijanis (24%), Gilaki and Mazandarani (8%), Kurds (7%), Arabs (3%), Baluchi (2%), Lurs (2%), Turkmens (2%), Laks, Qashqai, Armenians, Persian Jews, Georgians, Assyrians, Circassians, Tats, Mandaean, Gypsies, Brahuis, Hazara, Kazakhs and others (1%). However, Persian and its dialects are spoken as first language by 58%, whereas Azeri is spoken by 26%, Kurdish by 9%, Luri by 3%, Balochi by 1%, Arabic by 1%, and other languages by 2%. According to the U.S. Census Bureau,

5 million Persians left the country after the Persian revolution and are living around the world.

By focusing the study on issues that had prior interest for me, such as patriarchy, exile, loss of voice, and *abroo*, I have unquestionably limited the scope of the study. This phenomenological study could indeed have been broader, but I restricted the study by having women focus on these topics, because I find them more interesting. Even though delineating the boundaries of the study in this way does indicate a certain lack of flexibility in my lens, I believe the study benefited from its focus on these topics. A study on a grander scale, where the women talk freely about whatever they wanted, might have yielded enough material to delve into issues like exile or *abroo* in sufficient depth; but the constraints of time and money limited the number and size of the narratives I could collect and process.

I also admit that the confinement of my lens limited my study and research, as well as supported my countertransference. My analytical lens was mainly Jungian. Further in-depth studies need to elaborate on the intrapsychic view and interpersonal view of the Persian male-female dynamics.

This present study is an attempt to shed light on the psychological impact that patriarchy has had on Persian women. The result of this study is subjective due to the nature of the phenomenological approach, whose purpose is to explore the experience of the individual. It does not rely on quantifiable results about Persian women, and as such it cannot be entirely objective. Thus I propose that quantitative research about the subject be conducted alongside this qualitative research. I believe that quantitative research will

validate the findings of this qualitative research. This approach will have enormous value to the field of psychology for those therapists interested in working with this population.

Suggestions for Future Research

Although more research from a phenomenological perspective is needed in the field, results such as the current study would be reinforced by quantitative studies along similar lines. I would like to see research into the effects of patriarchy on the self-esteem of women and its correlation with the silencing of their voices. Any study that measures the loss of voice, loss of self, or other psychological symptoms related to the topic of this study, would be a gift to the field of psychology. I would like to see an integration of both the qualitative and quantitative dimensions of the study.

In order to get more valuable and accurate results, I suggest a larger sample for this qualitative research. I propose that the research include three different age groups of participants. Each research project would be done separately. The first sample would be from the population of women between 20 and 30 years of age, who were born after the Persian revolution. The next study would be a sample of women between 40 and 60 years of age. These women would be ex-patriots, and most of them would have emigrated from Iran in their adolescent years. It would also be interesting to look at a sample of women older than 60, in order to see how patriarchy has affected them differently and how they may have passed on patriarchal values and practices to their children.

The focus of this phenomenological study has been the exploration of the *baten* (internal world) of Persian women. It is crucially important to explore how the *peesaram* (boy's) culture affects the psyches of men. Patriarchy is a vicious cycle. Men and

woman are both victims of this oppressive system. Men become butchers of the feminine, and women perpetuate the system by enforcing the *pessaram* culture, putting their boys on pedestals. These Persian boys are brought up by mothers who are in many cases completely disconnected from their true selves and emotionally unavailable to their sons and daughters. Qualitative research into how patriarchy affects its male counterparts would be extremely valuable for any therapist working with this population, especially for those performing couples therapy.

My study was limited by my Jungian lens, and the theoretical framework provided by the authors I chose to inform my study. These authors, who shaped my thinking, also tended to support my countertransferences. Further studies should elaborate on the intrapsychic process and interpersonal view of the Persian male-female dynamics.

Psychological Reflections

The homeless mutes are Persian women who have not been mirrored and have no capacity to give or receive. They are the homeless mutes. As mere echoes, voiceless and without a capacity to feel, they have become empty shells.

Under the reign of their fathers and husbands, these women live in a state of fear. They are cut off from their power, vision, and voice. They are unable to think for themselves or articulate their thoughts, feelings, and needs without being coerced. Patriarchy teaches them to please and to serve their men. In this system, fathers have power and mothers are powerless. All have experienced loss of voice to one degree or another. A prevalent theme in all of the interviews was depression.

Studies have demonstrated that silence, the inhibition of self-expression, whether of thoughts or feelings, has been a reason for depression and eating disorders in women (Jack, 1991). Women with these disorders tend to cater to the needs of their partners at the expense of their own feelings and expressions, which reduces their self worth (Jack, 1991). Self-esteem is an important part of the physical and psychological health of a person. It is a vital prerequisite for normal functioning in the world (Branden, 1994). Branden states that self-esteem has a “survival value” and is indispensable to normal and healthy development. Branden (1994) remarks: “Self-esteem is a need analogous to calcium, rather than to food or water. Lacking it to a serious degree, we do not necessarily die, but we are impaired in our ability to function” (p. 17). He also argues that poor self-esteem pulls us into anxiety and depression.

By putting her partner’s needs, interests, and desires before her own, a woman erodes her sense of self-esteem and becomes emotionally silent. She censors her feelings and her thoughts. Carol Gilligan (1982) demonstrates that women are more likely than men to derive their self-worth from relationships. Some women, in order to feel worthy, bend to their husbands’ needs. Some women seek safety and peace. Yas talks about how she censored herself in order to maintain peace and harmony within the household. Jack (1991) states that: “a woman puts her partner’s needs before her own and undergoes a process of silencing the self to maintain and to ensure the safety and survival of a primary relationship” (p. 55). When a woman is dependent on and dominated by her husband, he assumes an outsized importance in her life. His attention, kindness, and support become as necessary as air, and their deprivation can asphyxiate her. The fundamental problem is not that Persian men should correct their behavior so as

to provide more “air;” it is that Persian women should not be so dependent on their husbands in the first place. Under such circumstances, a Persian woman will sacrifice nearly anything, no matter how important, rather than risk compromising her relationship with her husband.

Another common theme in the portraits is the praise women receive for compliancy, silence, and adaptability. The more silent and obedient a woman is, the more desirable she is. Schierse-Leonard (1983) explains that a woman’s role is defined through beauty and obedience. The patriarchal attitude encourages obedience, duty, and rationality at the expense of creativity, spontaneity, and feminine qualities. Fathers demand that their daughters follow the conventional feminine roles, which devalue women. This process not only defines the role of women, it also beheads them, rendering them utterly silent. By keeping his daughter in a *puella* position of dependence, a father projects his desire to make his daughter a servant. Schierse-Leonard (1983) explains that the *puella* girl’s identity is defined by her father’s needs (p. 17). Schierse-Leonard calls this phenomenon the father-daughter wound. She states:

The father-daughter wound is a condition of our culture and to that extent, the plight of all men and women today. Women frequently are considered inferior to men. Men often are put down if they show feminine qualities. Implicit in the father-daughter wound is a disturbed relation between the masculine and feminine principles. And this affects not only individuals but also partners, groups, and whole societies. Both men and women suffer from it. Both are confused about their own identities and roles vis-a-vis the other. (p. 25)

The devaluation of the feminine in both men and women throws a person off balance. Every man has a feminine side, and every woman has a masculine side. The task of growth is to integrate these halves of the individual. When one part is missing (i.e. it is hidden or unconscious), then the personality becomes one-sided. Women who

live under the rule of a domineering father and carry their father's projection of beauty and obedience cannot individuate. They are stuck in the father's projection and cut off from their feminine roots. They are plagued by the "animus projection." These girls identify with the negative anima and become partners with patriarchy. Like patriarchs, the women adapt and identify with the oppressor. As a victim and abuser, a mother carries the negative anima within herself and, full of rage and despair, she projects it onto her son. The mother tries to domesticate the son and keep him in the nest, under her control just as she was controlled. Mothers fear their sons' independence and prevent them from setting forth on their hero-journeys of separation.

Robert Bly (1990) argues that in order for a boy to separate from his mother, he needs to steal the key to the wild man's cage from under the pillow of his mother. Boys who fall under the spell of the mother develop a mother complex and fall under the archetype of the *puer aeternus* (Schierse-Leonard, 1983). These are men who remain boys and are fixated in their adolescent stages of development. They lack the strong infrastructure of the self and a sense of inner order. Jung (1954/1959, p. 85, [CW5, para. 162]) points to two disturbances in a man with a mother complex: homosexuality and Don Juanism.

A mother with a negative animus castrates her son and attacks his maleness. Freud (1917/1955) points to the castration complex in boys as a phenomenon that is developed before the age of 3 (pp. 125-133). He argues that little boys, when they discover that their sisters and mothers do not have penises, become frightened that their penises may be removed. These little boys develop a castration complex. Downing (1991), quoting Murray Stein, states: "Castration is the ultimate act of unmaning and

humiliation. It is also deprivation of the masculine ability to fertilize and impregnate; it is sterilization of the spirit” (p. 77). Castration injures the souls of men, affecting their free will and making their egos weak. A man with a weak ego transfers it to his daughter, making her insecure, frigid, and anxious. The cycle goes on and on.

Countertransference and Depth Psychological Reflections

I felt very privileged to interview the participants. Throughout the interviews I felt highly mirrored. My countertransference was vast, and I struggled with my own biases. Each participant shed light on my own disowned parts. Each story was a means to a certain higher level of self-awareness. I own my countertransferences, and I take full responsibility for them.

I can only speak of what became apparent to me through this work. Each participant represented a new terrain that I nonetheless recognized from my own experience, and came to understand better through my observations. I saw the reflection of different Goddesses in different participants. The archetypal Goddess patterns of each participant raise them out of their patriarchal framework and illuminate the grandeur of their cores as authentic women. Bolen (1984) argues that these powerful inner patterns—or archetypes—are responsible for major differences among women. Bolen explains that through these archetypes we can distinguish women who prefer the traditional roles of homemaking from those who prefer independence. The knowledge of the Goddess helps women access themselves; it allows men to understand women better and provides therapists with insight into women’s intrapsychic and interpersonal conflicts (Bolen, 1984). Knowledge of the Goddesses empowers women, strengthens their cores, and raises their consciousness. It removes them from the arid landscapes of the desert and

puts them in their place: the Garden of Eden. I saw the reflection of different Goddesses in the different women who participated in my study.

Camellia (Shekhinah).

I became aware of my countertransference to Camellia when I felt I was pregnant with her deadness. A feeling of deadness had hovered over me. It was like a stone within me, and I was immobile. I was carrying Camellia's depression in a way that necessitated removing myself from work for a while. I could not write about her or work on her portrait.

Camellia is a woman who has lived to please her father and strives for perfection. She basks under the gleam of her idealized father's gaze. At the same time this idealized father is also the father she fears. Under this tyranny, Camellia is cut off from her instincts and her feminine roots. She says, "I am . . . my father's daughter. I live from the neck up." She is Athena, the symbol of a perfect dutiful daughter, whose loyalty is to her patriarch. The image that haunted me throughout working with Camellia was an image that a client of mine related to me years ago. She had stated that she often felt like she was behind a glass, watching life pass her by. For me, Camellia was Snow White in her glass coffin. Raped by the masculine power, she was "emotionally silent." A similar image appears in Marion Woodman's (1982) work:

In life she lives without her body; in dreams, she appears behind glass . . . glass is an insulator that does not conduct heat, and the woman imprisoned in a glass coffin is not in touch with her passion for life. From her prison, the tiniest details of living take on a mystical beauty. In her aloneness, she fantasizes her emotions, but she has no "I" with which to experience real feeling. Life does not flow through her. Having been filled with her father all her life, she has learned exactly how to mirror a man, but she remains a reflector, Jung calls her the "anima woman" . . . she has a pseudo-male psychology. (p. 135)

As long as she remains in the house of her father, she is a prisoner. The other side of Camellia, which is buried under the layers of the “anima woman,” is the light of *Shekhinah*—“the association of the Holy Spirit with the feminine aspect of the divine is restored in the image of *Shekhinah*” (Baring & Cashford, 1991, p. 638). Baring and Cashford call her the deepest self and the divine in the body of both women and men. She is the force of connection, and through her luminous light “everything is linked to every thing else.” She is “mother of all the human souls,” she is the essence and, according to Kabbalah, “she was the mystic community of Israel, and ultimately of every Jewish individual. These souls are sparks of the fiery *Shekhinah*, which are ‘scattered’ in exile and have to be gathered together again to their source” (p. 641). Unless she accesses the *Shekhinah* part of herself, Camellia will remain in a psychological exile from the landscape of her soul.

Laleh (Demeter).

Laleh is the image of the Goddess Demeter, the archetype of the maternal mother. She is the source of psychological, physical, and spiritual nourishment for others. Her generosity has no limit. She also personifies the Goddess Artemis (Bolen, 1984) in that she is an advocate of equal rights for women. Competent and separate from men, she has her own views. Laleh reported in her interview that she regained her identity and her voice by working with an outstanding group of people. Her salvation was to become the voice of women who needed her emotional and financial support. Not only has she been single-handedly a mother to her own children; she has been a mother, a shelter, and a supporter for women in need.

Maryam (Artemis).

With each of the Goddesses, the mosaic of my own psyche began to emerge. I identified partially with Maryam, who represented for me the image of Artemis. Here is her archetypal story: Like Artemis, Maryam is a superwoman, who refuses to be limited by a woman's traditional role and instead holds her own with men; she is an emancipated, high-achieving, career-oriented hunter. Maryam is an idealized superwoman who shares her mythical archetype with a new generation of Persian-American women, who are climbing the corporate ladder faster than speed of light. Maryam is rising to power by killing the Dionysian side of her nature, "which is archetypal and makes the connection between soul and body" (Lopez-Pedraza, 2000, p. 34).

Jung believed that we are all affected by the archetype without being aware of it, or having control over its forces. He believed that these archetypal forces hibernated for a period of time until the cultural climate was right for them to appear. In patriarchal Iran, the entire personality of a woman could not be expressed, but in the United States the cultural conditions were conducive to expressing the titanic side of her nature. With the titanic archetype dominant in Maryam's psyche, she loses her sense of sexuality. However, she is strong, determined, and independent. She feels whole by herself, and she personifies an independent feminine spirit. She is in charge of her own destiny.

Maryam is similar to the mythic Goddess Artemis (Bolen, 1984). As Artemis, she concerns herself with the women's rights movement and tries to help powerless, hopeless women. She protects battered women and children, and tries to find them shelter. She empowers Persian women through her seminars. She innately models Artemis; she is bold and competent, and feels she is equal to men. Bolen states:

This archetype enables a woman to feel whole without a man. With it, she can pursue interests and work at what matters to her without needing masculine approval. Her identity and sense of worth is based on who she is and what she does, rather than whether she is married, or to whom. (p. 49)

Maryam is whole by herself. She is active and undomesticated. As an Artemis archetype, she emphasizes separateness.

Lily (Inanna).

The story of Lily is the story of transformation and integration. In order to shed her old patriarchal skin and leave her father's house she, like Inanna, makes a descent in the search of her anima. The image of the descent into the underworld has been an ongoing journey for myself. In *The Descent to the Goddess* (1981), Perera explains that in order for women to redeem themselves from being “daughters of their fathers” and to confront the archetypal patriarchal shadow, they need to descend into the underworld. Perera relates how Inanna passes through the seven gates of the underworld and returns to the dark in order to regain her potency and sacrifice old patterns of dependency. By connecting with her complement, Ereshkigal, Inanna makes a bipolar wholeness pattern of the archetypal feminine. Perera argues that women must follow Inanna's journey in order to achieve transformation and integration. Lily, by leaving her husband's house and by changing her religion, has become a reincarnation of Inanna. Her rebirth makes her the mother of heaven and earth.

Yas (Echo).

Yas's silence was a reminder of my own silence and loss of voice. I was unable to articulate my feelings properly for days, and I felt a deep sense of loss. Like Yas, I felt I did not exist. My “Me” was hidden deep down under my shadows. Yas is Echo. Her voice, like that of Echo, is restricted to resonance and repetition. As such, she has no

initiative of her own. She keeps repeating the last words of Narcissus. The nymph Echo is in love with Narcissus, and, when she embraces him, he rejects her. Narcissus avoids Echo's love and instead bends to the will of Nemesis, in which he remains in love with his own reflection.

Yas's husband is the image of Narcissus; he sees nothing except his own image in the pool. He has no tolerance for Yas's opinions or needs. When Narcissus rejects the nymph Echo, she goes into the woods and remains in the caves. Grief takes over her, and her flesh shrinks, and her bones change to rocks, and nothing is left of her true voice. All she can do is echo the voice of Narcissus. Yas's flesh has also shrunk. She remarks that living with her abusive husband has left her selfless. She states: "For me, peace was the most important thing. I am not here any more; part of me died . . . I am like a candle that has never been lit."

This beautiful candle is slowly being lit. Yas is being mirrored properly by her boss. Her companions at work are reflecting her beautiful attributes back to her. It is a slow beginning, but a very hopeful one. Through her work, Yas is starting to build self-esteem and regain her voice.

Sunflower (Athena).

The theme of the dutiful daughter was prevalent in most of the interviews. To me, Sunflower resembled the goddess Athena. Like Athena, Sunflower's life is devoted to obedience, duty, and rationality. She sides with patriarchy. Bolen (1984) states that the Athena woman "lives in her mind and is often out of touch with her body. She considers the body a utilitarian part of herself, of which she is unaware until it gets sick or hurt" (p. 92). She is not sexual or sensual, and she has remained celibate most of her

adult life. Living in her head, she lacks emotional intensity and passion. Bolen states that the Goddess lives a one-dimensional life and is mainly consumed by her work. She further remarks that the Goddess Athena did not have a mother and took pride in being her father's daughter. Athena lacks the spontaneity of a child because she was "never a child, she was born as an adult" (p. 105). Having been born without a true mother, having been raised to fight and think like a man, having devoted herself entirely to her arts, and having renounced sexuality, Athena needs to rediscover the feminine within herself and connect to the mother archetype, Demeter.

Sunflower has lived most of her life from the neck up, without any connection to the dionysian side of her. Yet she has always had the spark of Aphrodite, the Goddess of love, beauty, and creativity (Bolen, 1984). After her divorce, Sunflower was able to release the Aphrodite side of her. Her coquettish ways of being in the world manifests itself in her clothes, toiletries, and her coiffure. Her consistent attention and affection for her friends, her children, and her grandchildren shows that she is rising above the limitations of the Athena archetype and connecting gradually with the Demeter archetype necessary for her to become whole.

Rose (Hera).

The rose is the national flower of Iran. Every year in mid-May, the Festival of Rosewater is held in Ghamsar, Kashan. Participant Rose is a young Persian woman in her late 20s who resembles the goddess Hera. Like most Persian girls, her main goal in life is to get married and create a family. Like Hera, she embodies the Goddess's qualities of marriage and commitment. Bolen (1984) mentions that the Goddess Hera "yearns to be a wife." The Hera archetype enables a woman to bond, to be loyal and

faithful, and to endure the ups and the downs of a relationship. As Bolen goes on to argue, every woman needs a bit of the goddess Hera in her to build a successful relationship. Marriage means fulfillment. The marriage archetype is also symbolic of wholeness, and as such marriage is sacred. Bolen poetically states: “when Hera is her archetype, a bride may feel like a Goddess on her wedding day. For her impending marriage evokes the anticipation of fulfillment and completeness, which fills her with joy. This is the radiant bride, full of Hera” (p. 143). Integration comes in different forms or shapes for people. Like many Persian women, Rose finds harmony and wholeness in creating a nest. As a Hera Goddess, she is a receptive vessel that embraces her male counterpart. It is through the other and with the other that she achieves integration.

Etesami (The Virgin).

As I understand the virgin archetype, it is that aspect of the feminine in both men and women that has the courage to be and the flexibility to be always becoming. Etesami embodies the characteristics of the virgin. She is an emancipated woman who is very much in tune with her needs and desires. Free from all the societal pressures of *abroo*, she is not dependent on what other people think. She lives her life according to her rules and in accordance with her core. She is connected to the source of who she really is, and this empowers her to feel secure and make art on a daily basis. She is unconventional, and does not see woman’s role as limited to cook, caretaker, wife, and mother. She does not oppose these roles; she is at peace with herself. She leads an unconventional life and is not influenced or disturbed by the standards of non-virgins. She is free, and she does what she wants, because she is at peace with herself. She has a strong voice and a strong determination. As a virgin, she is a 360-degree mandala of wholeness. She encompasses

authority and autonomy; she invites transformation and sexual freedom. Marion

Woodman (1985) passionately states:

Anyone involved in soul-making is relating through the virgin, because only she is able to catch the inevitability of the moment in action. In her, sexuality and love are perceived as manifestations of the divine, and that energy in daily life becomes the mystery of transformation. On a collective scale, her love could create a greater explosion than any nuclear device ever conceived. (p. 168)

Etesami uses love and a focus on the here and now as ingredients for soul-making. Her art is demonstrative of her ability to capture love and other sentiments in the moment, and then transform them into sublime images. She does this with a passion and an understanding that her art, once on canvas, takes on a life of its own. It is independent of her; it is its own entity. Love, passion, and divine freedom propel her through her daily life, and she pulls along other people in her wake. In her interpersonal relationships, such as with her boyfriend, she resembles the archetype of the virgin by cherishing him unconditionally. I felt really accepted and, after the interview, empowered by Etesami.

White Water Lily (Sophia).

Sophia in Hebrew translates as wisdom. Sophia is the feminine personification of wisdom. There are Goddesses in every woman; there are many Goddesses in everyone. Every woman is sitting in consort with many angels, their Goddesses. The Goddesses Sophia is sitting on the throne of all the Goddesses. She is the “highest quality of soul” and the integrated voice of all the Goddesses. She is the root of all wisdom, the love bridge between the body and the soul. Her wisdom

belongs to the here and now, the immediate moment. William Blake calls describes it as the moment in each day that Satan cannot find, as short as the pulsation of an artery. It is the moment in which life is conceived not in the some repeatable fashion, for it is unique and particular to the moment. (Woodman, 1982, p. 74)

Sophia is regeneration, rebirth, and the sacred marriage and union of the opposites. It was very evident from the moment that I met White Water Lily that she was the reincarnation of Sophia, buried in the tornado of personas. Persona is the psychological cloth that we wear, the veil that insulates us from the world, and yet depending on its thickness, it can also kill us. Perfectionism is the force that drives us to thicken our personas or masks, putting a barrier between what is our authentic self and the world.

Robert H. Hopcke (1995) states that Jung viewed persona as

masks worn by actors to indicate the role they played. . . . It is, as its name implies, only a mask of the collective psyche, a mask that feigns individuality, making others and oneself believe that one is individual, whereas one is simply acting a role through which a collective psyche speaks. (p. 12)

When the persona becomes too thick, the self will sink further in the abyss of the collective.

Due to societal pressures of *abroo*, White Water Lily had been dissected from her body and remained in the muddy pond of the collective. It was evident that her mother was also uprooted from her body, and that her father was a “vegetable,” or non-emotional being. Severed from the powers of her internal Goddess Sophia, White Water Lily began to show psychological symptoms. Woodman (1982) explains this dynamic as such:

There is a huge problem, however, where a person is not rooted in the body. Where the mother is not sufficiently in touch with her body she cannot give the child the bonding necessary to give it confidence in its own instincts. The child cannot relax into her body, nor later into its own. The underlying fear of life and fear of abandonment is only minimally concealed and the frightened ego is in constant danger of being swamped by the unknown forces that may sweep in from outside or from the unconscious. On the weak foundation is constructed a rigid superstructure based on collective values—discipline, efficiency, duty. The energy that wants to flow into creating, living, playing, is forced to find its outlet in blind compulsions. (p. 85)

Behind the fortress of *abroo*, White Water Lily had no room to breathe. She had to hide her Asian boyfriend from everyone. She always portrayed an image of perfection, looked great, and pretended that all her feelings are fine. But behind this wall of perfection, paranoia, compulsions, and anxieties started to attack her. She said, “You begin to take on a certain persona, and part of your brain might start believing it because it is repetitive. Anything that is repetitive goes into the subconscious.”

Adaptation is the key to survival, and White Water Lily symbolizes a woman who has been able to break out of her cocoon and become a butterfly. A young girl of 26, she is very at ease in her skin and in her body. There is wisdom in being able to go in out of the shells of personas and adapt to one’s environment without losing one’s true self in the process. Hopcke (1995) quotes Jung thus:

What we see of the individual is the persona. We are all shells here, only surfaces, and we have very dim ideas of what is inside—as well as to a kind of crust over the personality. If I should believe I was exactly what I am doing, it would be a terrible mistake; I would not fit that fellow . . . I must know that for the time being I am playing Caesar; then later I am quite small, a mere nothing, unimportant. So this personal crust is a ready-made function form which you can withdraw, or into which you can step at will. In the morning I can say “Je suis roi” {I am King} and at night “Oh, damn it all, it is all nonsense!” (p. 22)

A person needs to have a psychological awareness and flexibility, and know when and how to get in and out of their personas without jeopardizing their identity.

I would like to conclude my words about White Water Lily by stating that it was pure synchronicity that she is associated to the Goddess Sophia. Water Lily is the symbol of rebirth; the flower grows up from mud, and is symbolic of all truth, beauty, peace, and enlightenment. White Water Lily has been at the bottom of the muddy pond, but has risen above it to be a beautiful, radiant woman. To coronate White Water Lily, I would like to quote Baring and Cashford (1991):

Sophia is seated upon the lion throne, as were all the goddesses before her. The divine child is held on her lap and her right hand holds the root of a flower, sheikh blossoms as the lily, disclosing that she is the root of all things. The dove, for so many thousand years the principal emblem of the goddess, rests on the lily, and a stylized meander frames the right-hand side of the scene. All these images relate to the medieval figure of Sophia to the older images of the goddess, which reach back into the Neolithic past. But here the goddess is given a specific emphasis, which offers an image of Wisdom as the highest quality of the soul and suggests that, evolving from root to flower, the soul can ultimately blossom as the lily and, understanding all things, soar like the bird between the dimensions of earth and heaven. (p. 609)

Like Sophia, White Water Lily is well rooted in her own identity, aware of her masks. The symbol of the dove represents her feminine consciousness, which mediates between the different aspects of herself.

Reflections on the Nine Goddesses

Although each of these women seemed to have a salient archetypal goddess, they were certainly not limited to these archetypes. Instead, each woman participated to a greater or lesser extent in each of the archetypes. There is a deep-seated Sophia within each of the participants, who mediates between the body and the soul, creating a balance in the Goddesses. The Goddess Aphrodite is also present in all of the participants. In *Re-Visioning Psychology*, Hillman (1975) says that each person is “a polytheistic consciousness wandering all over the place, in the vales and long rivers, in the woods, the sky and under the earth” (p. 33). Therefore, each of us has many dimensions; every man and woman can be a congress of different voices and personalities, as well as a congress of different Gods and Goddesses.

Appendix A

Informed Consent for Experimental Study

PROJECT TITLE: The Psychological Exile of Persian Women under Patriarchy

1. I have agreed to have **Helen Mahfar** ask me a series of questions about my process of psychological exile under patriarchy.
2. These questions will be asked in the researcher's office or home, in a conference room, or in my own home and will take about ninety minutes of my time. I further understand that this interview will be tape-recorded. Following the interview, with the tape-recorder turned off, the researcher will debrief with me for five to ten minutes to answer any questions or concerns I may have.
3. I understand that the purpose of asking these questions is to explore the nature of the phenomenon of psychological exile of Persian women in the context of cultural change for research purposes.
4. I understand that some of the questions might be embarrassing, upsetting, or annoying to me. The researcher has explained that my name will not be recorded in the tape-recorded interview and that my answers will be used only by the investigator in the analysis of the data. The researcher has also explained that a data transcription service may be used to transcribe the recorded interview. In such an event, I understand that my name and identifying information will not be given to the transcriber and that only the researcher will know my identity as a participant. My identity will never be exposed to any one except the researcher. I will remain anonymous through out this study and in the event of publication of the material. The identity of the participant will remain confidential during the interview and after publication of study. In addition, another consent form will be drafted by Helen Mahfar's lawyer to insure that the identity of the participant will not be exposed.
5. I understand that this research may result in an increased understanding of the phenomenon of Psychological exile of Persian women under patriarchy, which may or may not be of immediate value to me personally. Any other benefit, such as increased personal insight, may or may not result from participation in this study but is not the primary aim of the study.
6. Information about this study, and the place of my interview in it, has been given to me by **Helen Mahfar**. I can reach her if I have a question or concern about the study or my participation in it, by leaving a message for her at **(XXX) XXX-XXXX**. I understand that she will return my call within 24 hours.
7. Furthermore, if I have any serious questions or concerns, I may contact the chairperson for this study, Dr. Panajian, at Pacifica Graduate Institute by calling (805) 969-3626.
8. I understand that I can refuse to answer any question and can withdraw from this study without jeopardizing my standing with the researcher, or risking

unfair treatment by her. In the event that I do withdraw, every effort will be made by the researcher to destroy the data she has collected from me. The tape will be returned to the participant after it has been transcribed.

9. I am not receiving any compensation for participating in this study.

Date _____ Signature _____

Appendix B

Research Questions

Introductory Question

What is like to be a woman under a patriarchal regime?

Follow-up Questions

How do you experience your voice under patriarchy?

How do you express yourself under patriarchy?

How does *abroo* affect you? How do you experience your sense of self?

Do you experience any psychological symptoms under patriarchy?

How do you experience your sexuality under patriarchy?

How are you perceived by men under patriarchy?

How do men perceive you under patriarchy?

Appendix C

Aspects (Themes)

Aspects by Participant

Sunflower

1. I was valued: my birth brought luck and prosperity to the family.
2. Male dominance: never expressed thought or feeling.
3. Felt pressured: was an obedient, dutiful marionette without freedom of decision-making.
4. Her behavior was constrained: her sexuality was repressed.
5. Loss of voice up through divorce. Today I have a voice.
6. Before marriage men court women under false pretenses.
7. Objectified . . . as property to be traded away in an arranged marriage.
8. Family instills fear pressures marriage. Message is “luck knocks on your door only once.”
9. Others decide what happiness is for you.
10. My sense of independence and my work experience before marriage in Iran saved me.
11. I brought shame to my family because of divorce.
12. Value determined by dowry rather than intrinsic qualities.
13. Women are discouraged from developing independence, having career, or pursuing dreams.
14. Sexual repression.

15. I was harassed by interfering in-laws.
16. I was sacrificed for the good of others.
17. Required to maintain mask of *abroo* for the sake of parents and children.
18. Manifest psychological symptoms: low self-esteem, low self-confidence, depression, and anxiety.
19. Divorce and therapy as salvation return freedom of expression and decision-making.
20. Persian women live for others, they count as zero.
21. Today I am more open, I smile, I express myself through yoga, shopping, getting haircuts.
22. Therapy helped me to empower myself.

Camellia

1. Patriarchy is a disease, it impairs judgment, it creates seclusion, and it makes one invisible.
2. Gender inequality (Prince Syndrome): women love their sons more than their daughters. Both genders maintain and transmit patriarchal values from generation to generation.
3. Societal pressure of *abroo*; split of self into a public and private persona, portrayal of a false, perfect image to the world; honor is attached to it.
4. Male dominant: Women are emotionally and verbally abused by men.
5. Women are not valued as much as men.
6. Women are raised for marriage only.

7. Their roles are confined to being a mother, a dutiful daughter, and a docile wife.
8. No freedom of expression (muted voice), emotional voice is silent.
9. Intellect strengthened at the expense of emotions; emotions are repressed.
10. Madonna-whore complex: sexuality repressed.
11. Erosion of authentic self.
12. Manifest psychological symptoms: low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and inferiority complex.
13. Dysfunctional family: triangulation.
14. Gender inequality: feminine power dismissed; loss of voice.
15. It defects: I am a handless maiden.
16. Identification with father.

Yas

1. Both genders maintain and transmit patriarchal values from generation to generation.
2. Male dominance: I am subjected to verbal and emotional abuse.
3. Loss of voice: I never expressed thought or feeling.
4. Dutiful wives are submissive and obedient. They lack freedom.
5. Financial dependency traps women in marriages.
6. Abusive marriage: Husband identifies with his mom; a comment about his mom is an attack on him.
7. Husband exploits wife's vulnerabilities and threatens divorce.
8. I rebel, then surrender for the sake of keeping my sanity and my family.

9. Unwanted at home, but liked, valued, and empowered at work.
10. Persians wear a mask of perfection: perfect house, perfect kids, perfect marriage, and perfect finances.
11. Societal pressure of *abroo*: Women's most important mission is to maintain *abroo*.
12. I express myself in journal and email, where there is no eye contact; I avoid fear of judgment that comes with wearing clothes before others.
13. Encourages own children to have a voice.
14. Loss of self; forgot what she wanted.
15. Psychologist encourages her to develop sense of self-worth.
16. Psychological symptoms: lack of self-confidence, guilt, depression, anxiety attacks, shaking of hands, lack of concentration, headaches, and guilt.
17. Gender inequalities: sexual freedom for men and not for women. Sex is taboo for women.
18. Madonna-whore complex: sluts vs. *kanum*.
19. Culture of secrecy; lack of trust; Persians don't even confide in therapists.
20. Today, expatriates are more likely to be educated and have careers; fewer housewives.
21. Low opinion of men: men are abusive and nasty; they launch their inner wolves; they begin to bite so hard and so long.
22. Women are property of men.
23. Men treat women like princesses while courting, but not after marriage.
24. Food is a symbol of love.

25. Roles of women are defined: housewife, maid, good cook, and object of desire.
26. I disappeared, I lost myself, I forgot what I want.

Maryam

1. Complicity of women: women internalize sexual discrimination and other social-cultural belief.
2. Prince Syndrome: women love their sons more than their daughters.
3. Both genders maintain and transmit patriarchal values from generation to generation.
4. Men dominate and discriminate against women.
5. Gender inequality: feminine power dismissed; men have more privileges.
6. Exceptional father: open-minded, emphasized education and free expression.
7. Exceptional self: fearless and endowed with a strong—though temporarily muted—voice; excelled in academics.
8. Believed in her self-worth.
9. Rejected dress code, identified with men, dismissed the feminine.
10. Seen as masculine (strong and straightforward) but becomes feminine (sense of humor and feminine touch) around certain intellectual men.
11. Fight against *abroo*: fought against *abroo* her entire life, did not mold children according to *abroo*.
12. Sexual anxiety: sex is taboo. Discomfort with sex.

13. Psychological symptoms: women suffer from low self-esteem, self-hatred, social isolation, passive-aggressive behavior, anxiety personality disorders, hypervigilant narcissism, and borderline personality disorders.
14. Political anxiety: after revolution, experienced depression and anxiety; during political hardship, felt helpless and dreamed of being violent and acquiring power.
15. Gendered language: masculine language, which protects, defends, and sets boundaries, is harsher and untrusting; feminine language is civilized, soft, and trusting.
16. Lower opinion of men: thirty years ago, I esteemed men more.
17. Today men are like vulnerable stuffed tigers that cannot bite.
18. I feel more powerful than men.
19. Women are more skillful and more sophisticated psychologically.

Lily

1. Societal pressure in the form of *abroo*; portrayal of a false perfect self to the world.
2. Male dominance: verbal and emotional abuse.
3. Psychological problems (low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and shame).
4. Gender inequality; boys have more privileges in most areas of life.
5. Gender differences (Prince Syndrome): women love their sons more than their daughters.
6. Both genders maintain and transmit patriarchal values from generation to generation.

7. Tomboy complex: as a tomboy I felt better and more shielded.
8. Madonna-whore complex—sexual suppression.
9. Sexuality is tied to shame and guilt.
10. Women as appendages to men.
11. I was muted, deafened, and blinded.
12. I am caught between my higher self and collective dogmas of society.
13. I wore the veil as a protection and it gave me an identity separate from men.
14. Social laws discriminate against women.
15. Women are relegated to be housewives, cook and take care of children.
16. Your self-image is tied to image of an entire family.
17. Educated women are devalued; men are intimidated by me.
18. Divorce as a loss of image.
19. God of Islam favors men.
20. Without family support, I turned to Christ and I found a God that loves me.
21. Today I find most sense of liberation and empowerment in my sexuality.
22. Sexuality is an area where I am very Westernized and open.
23. Traditional men are threatened by autonomous women.
24. Patriarchy dismisses the feminine and devalues women; women can't speak their minds.
25. Martyrdom, women self-sacrifice.
26. Patriarchy is internalized. You can take a girl out of Iran but you can't take Iran out of a girl.
27. Women are property of men and their identity is tied to men.

28. Today she is a liberated woman and connected to her spiritual heart.

Laleh

1. Positive correlation between financial independence, high self-esteem and a solid voice. Exceptional supporting father.
2. European boyfriend treated her like a queen, self-confidence and self esteem rose.
3. Both genders maintain and transmit patriarchal values from generation to generation.
4. Societal pressure of *abroo*.
5. Male dominance, verbal, emotional abuse and neglect.
6. Gender inequality: Little Prince Syndrome (the culture of valuing boys over girls).
7. Voice repressed during marriage.
8. Positive correlation between financial independence and increase in self-esteem.
Developed a solid voice.
9. Madonna-whore complex.
10. Woman is a chattel; women are objectified.
11. Her father built her, gave her love and respect.
12. She became the voice of other women; she helped them financially.
13. She expressed herself through work and clothes.
14. As a single woman, she was banned from married groups.
15. Sexual repression; she is cold.
16. Man looked at me as a whore because I was divorced.
17. Sex is taboo. I denied myself all kind of pleasures.

18. Demure appearance, not revealing skin, not laughing out loud in public.
19. Gender differences: men enjoy more privileges than women.
20. Major psychological symptoms: low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety.

Rose

1. Both genders maintain and transmit patriarchal values from generation to generation.
2. Patriarchy stops the process of normal growth and development.
3. Societal pressure of *abroo*; portrayal of a false, perfect image to the world.
4. *Abroo* keeps us from reaching our potentials; keeps us from tasting life.
5. Male dominance: difficult to be yourself, I am molded to everyone's expectations.
6. Encourages women to be mutes, docile, and lady-like: *kanum*.
7. Emotional voice is silent, repressed emotions, censorship.
8. Enforces secrecy and diplomacy. It is healthy. It preserves me from revealing myself.
9. Patriarchy is restrictive, but not completely negative.
10. Loss of voice: learned to speak in a pleasing way.
11. Culture makes women ashamed of their voices.
12. I am a perfectionist, an over-achiever. I judge myself.
13. Madonna-whore complex: encouraged to be *kanum* in society, a porn star in bed.
14. Women are objectified: smell good, look good, and be an object of desire.
15. Women are nurtured and raised for marriage; they are blamed if not married.

16. Patriarchy demands perfection from women. Men look for something far greater than they deserve or earn.
17. Mothers have unhealthy relationship with sons, lose boundaries.
18. Prince Syndrome: boys are valued more and are entitled to be arrogant and boisterous.
19. Told to hide my true self: I became reserved; my nature is free-spirited.
20. Gender inequality: men are granted more privileges than women.
21. Major psychological symptoms: low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, inferiority complex, shyness, fear of judgment. I am frozen statue: shame, guilt, change of perception.
22. Caught, as an émigré, between two cultures.
23. Now expresses self through writing, dancing, music, and friendship therapy.
24. Exceptional father.
25. Lack of spontaneity: I am frozen statue.
26. Persians don't live for the now.
27. Persians are unforgiving of imperfections.
28. In USA, I regained my self-confidence.
29. Beyond fear, they instill terror in you about sex.
30. I am perceived by some men as classy.

White Water Lily

1. Both genders maintain and transmit patriarchal values from generation to generation.
2. Complicity of women: patriarchy is self-inflicted by women, it is ingrained in them. *Pessaram* culture: women favor their sons over their daughters and perpetuate the system. Women are not encouraged to be independent or have careers.
3. Roles are well defined. Women are encouraged to get married.
4. Women have no alternate role models.
5. Patriarchy shapes women into victims and inspires aggression.
6. Psychological symptoms: patriarchy affects mental abilities, decision-making, and self-confidence; causes paranoia, fear based anxiety, and obsessive-compulsive disorder.
7. Women with power receive no validation.
8. Nonconformists are simply excluded from society.
9. Women follow the herd, change is difficult, and one generation follows the other.
10. The system of hierarchy is familiar to women.
11. Desperation to find husbands consumes women's lives.
12. Loss of voice: I developed a baby voice and a pleaser voice.
13. Baby voice protects me: no one hurts babies. Pleaser voice is to win affection of men.
14. Developed a false self by trying to please my parents.

15. Male dominance: women have no freedom of expression; their emotional life is silent.
16. *Abroo* comes from your parents.
17. Penis envy: likes to piss like boys.
18. She values virginity and wants to keep it.
19. Aggressive sexually.
20. Low opinion of men: patriarchs and men are spineless; everything revolves around their dicks and their world.

Etesami

1. Both genders maintain and transmit patriarchal values from generation to generation.
2. Male dominance: culture of intimidation, which breeds violence.
3. I have a strong voice, temporarily lost it under arrest in Iran.
4. Complicity of women: granting power to patriarchy and perpetuating female slavery.
5. Women abuse power when acquired, and, along with men, support the *Zaifeh* syndrome.
6. Gender inequality: women are slaves without rights, without freedom of speech, without decision-making power.
7. Invisibility of women: women ignored or dismissed; men avoid all contact; women who seek contact are labeled whores.

8. Limited roles for women: sacrifice personal dreams and accept sanctioned roles, first of bride/slave, then of mother, in which they perform domestic duties, breed, and take care of family.
9. Societal pressure of *abroo*: *abroo* is maintained at all costs. She didn't care about *abroo*.
10. Psychological symptoms: animal-like caginess, traumatized, anxiety, and psychosomatic complaints.
11. Patriarchy encourages docility, *kanum*, lady-like attitude.
12. Exceptional self: strong voice and will, reacted to patriarchy by becoming competitive and aggressive toward men; rejected marriage and childbirth as acceptance of enslavement; and found happiness with man she loves.
13. Exceptional family: democratic, supportive, did not impose gender role.
14. *Abroo*, though an illusion, imposes intense societal pressure, which fractures women into many personas.
15. Dutiful daughter sacrifices dreams, lives for *abroo*, accepts role of bride/slave, which leads to role of mother.
16. *Pessaram* culture: boys are put on a pedestal.
17. I find my solace in creating art.

Pooneh (Composite Portrait)

1. Both genders maintain and transmit patriarchal values from generation to generation.
2. Loss of voice: emotional voice is silent, no freedom of expression.

3. Suppressed sexuality, sex is taboo, demure appearance.
4. Madonna-whore complex: sluts vs. *kanoum*. Male dominance: verbal and emotional abuse, encourages obedience, dutifulness, takes away decision making power and free expression of feelings and thoughts.
5. Limited role of women: breeder, mother, dutiful daughter, and docile wife. Must take care of the family and perform domestic duties.
6. Prince Syndrome: women and men love their sons more than their daughters.
7. Manifest psychological symptoms: depression and anxiety, erosion of self-esteem and confidence.
8. Gender inequality: men have more privilege in all areas of life. Feminine power is dismissed.
9. Patriarchy encourages docility, *kanum*, lady-like attitude.
10. Societal pressure of *abroo*. *Abroo* is maintained at all cost; it is the most important mission in life, this portrayal of a false, perfect image.
11. Objectified and treated like property by men.
12. Patriarchy is about power; patriarchy is ingrained.
13. Patriarchy erodes self.
14. Taught to give up their dreams and sacrifice self for the sake of the family.
15. Found salvation through therapy, work, and financial independence.
16. Found an outlet for self-expression through clothes and writing.

A Summary of Aspects (Common Themes)

All the portraits have certain themes in common. Almost all the participants indicated that patriarchal system is abusive and devalues women. Almost all the participants indicated that under this system they have experienced emotional or verbal abuse. Male dominancy is a theme throughout all the interviews, and women are pressured . . . against self-expression, making decisions, and having their own thoughts. Nearly all participants stated that women living under patriarchy are expected to be docile and submissive. To them, the patriarchal culture instills fear and is power based. All the participants recalled that, at one point or another, they experienced a loss of voice under the patriarchal system. One of the two outspoken participants, Etesami, related that she chose silence when she was under arrest in Iran. Maryam was verbally abused by revolutionary guards while attending a meeting. She kept quiet and muted her voice. One participant stated that her real voice was divided into two voices; a baby voice, because no one would abuse a baby, and a pleaser voice used to get “idealistic and unconditional love from men.” One participant expressed that she had two voices, an internal and an external voice. Her internal voice was a judgmental voice and her external voice a fake voice. One participant stated that her voice is completely repressed, and she only agrees with her husband and obeys his orders in order to maintain peace in the family.

All the participants agreed that the system of patriarchy is maintained and perpetuated by both women and men. Both men and women enforce the values and rules of patriarchy, and one participant expressed that women in power abuse power and

subjugate women even more than their male counterparts. Mothers, mothers in-law, and female teachers were abusing other females.

Nearly all participants expressed that patriarchal values and beliefs are transmitted across generations. Today's mothers inherit it from their parents and are unconsciously transferring it to their children. The participants believed that the patriarchal system is ingrained in the psyches women, men, and children. They also stated that patriarchy has been transferred from Iran to United States. The *pešseram* culture, the culture of favoring boy over girls, is alive and well. Boys are favored for their gender and have more privileges like dating freely or, in some families, inheriting more money.

Eight out of 9 participants stated that they were marked by the societal pressure of *abroo* and were forced to bend by its rules. One participant was free from the spell of *abroo*, and said that her parents saw no value in living a fake life because they had suffered too much during the Iran-Iraq war. They valued freedom and wanted to raise their daughter in a healthy environment.

Seven out of 9 women indicated that the roles of women were defined to be a domestic, breed, and take care of the children and the husband. Participant Laleh indicated that her husband uses her as a *kohneh*, a dirty old cloth. The majority indicated that patriarchy encourages docility, even considers it a virtue. Seven out of 9 participants expressed that demure *kanoum*, the quality of being lady-like, is a requirement.

Eight out of 9 participants expressed that they were sexually repressed. Six talked about the negative influences of the madonna-whore complex.

All participants at one point or another had suffered from depression and anxiety. Symptoms of depression reported were feelings of helplessness, sadness, deadness,

seclusion, and lack of motivation. Other prevalent psychological symptoms were lack of self-esteem and self-confidence. Some participants felt stuck. Some were invisible and cried a lot. All of the participants complained about having experienced anxiety in one way or another. Symptoms included worrying, panic attacks, and fear. Shame, guilt, inferiority complex, impaired judgment, and lack of decision-making were also reported.

Appendix D

Interviews

Sun Flower Interview

What is it like to be a woman under a patriarchal regime?

I was born in Tehran in a more or less modern family. From the beginning my father taught us how to swim, and we had bicycles. This is about 50 years ago. I went to university in Tehran, and I was a great student. When I reached the age of 20, my older sister got married. Because my father has an amazing situation in Iran, or because of myself I don't really know, I had a lot of suitors. A man from our distant family—my father's side—had asked me for my hand a year in advance. My father had promised this man that, after I had finished my studies, he would arrange for us to meet. He had told him, "You are like my family. You are a good boy. You are educated, and you are wise."

My ex wrote letters to me for a year, and I said that I can't really know a person just corresponding by letter. I can't say if I can marry him, because he was studying overseas. He came to Iran, and we met, and he was very *koshtip*, fashionable and very *kosh barkord*, an interesting person. I asked him few questions, because I had heard from relatives and others that he had anger issues and had a bad personality (*bad aklag*). He was a relative of my dad. I saw that he is very happy, *kandeh ro*, smiley and he did not seem to be frustrated or angry. I asked him if we have an argument . . . fight what would be his reaction? He said why we would argue. There would be no reason for us to argue. I was a 20-year-old girl . . . *kar*, meaning donkey; this is, in Persian language, a

pejorative connotation for someone who is dumb. A person who is dumb and naïve is called a donkey. I was innocent, a Persian woman, who had never been with another man, and who had absolutely no experience with men. We started dating for 10 to 15 days, and he and his family were waiting impatiently to get my approval . . . a “yes” answer from me. At the time I was studying, and I agreed that he was a good man, but nevertheless I said “no” to him. My uncle insisted that luck knocks on one’s door only once, and one does not kick luck away, meaning that this man is a great match and I should consider him. My aunt said, “If it is your destiny, you will marry him, and, if it is not your *kesmat*, destiny, he will leave.” I told my aunty, “If there is an open well, should I throw myself in it, and say it is my faith?” This is a very fatalistic point of view. I said I have to study now, and I will answer later. For a month there was huge pressure from all sides for me to answer.

My ex said . . . made many promises. One was for us to . . . we would leave Iran for just a year, so that he can finish his studies, and then we will return for me to finish mine. He promised, and I suddenly . . . I said yes. I got married. I really don’t know what happened. I opened my eyes, and I realized I was married. This is the *sarnevast* (destiny) of many Persian girls. Overnight, under pressure and lies, they get married, and, of course, some marriages work out well, and others turn out to be horrible. My father used to always promise me that, if I study, he will send me abroad to finish my education. After I obtained my high school diplomas, he was afraid to send me abroad alone. At that time he insisted that I get married and leave with my husband to further my education. He also stated “I will pay for your education,” and he promised a good dowry for whoever came to ask for my hand. I believe this was a big mistake of my

father, because I was not a chattel for sale. I respect my father enormously, and even today his memories make me cry, but I suffered tremendously. I suffered, because I was considered a chattel with a price on my head, and I had an arranged marriage. When I was leaving Iran with my husband, my uncle told me, “You are going to Paradise. Why are you sad?” But, for me, to leave my friends and family behind was difficult. When I came to America, I realized that I had nothing in common with this man. He had lived for years in Europe, but he remained a Persian man at core. His belief system, his values were Persian. He believed that a good wife had to ask for permission from her husband to buy the quotidian necessities of life including simple things such as magazines and journals. He believed that I had to ask permission to leave the house. I had to ask for permission for buying anything for myself or the household. I was not raised with these harsh conditions. In Tehran, even though I was a student, and my father was wealthy, I worked, and I earned 950 *tomans* a month, which was a quite a sum for that time. It is equivalent of \$3,000 today. I did so much with my income, and everyone told me, “You are *doktar felani*, daughter of such a well-known man. Why do you work? Do you need to work?” My answer was, “I want to be independent; I want to be on my own two feet.”

This attitude plus my work experience helped me later on in Europe to *gelim kod ra az ab beksham*, “make ends meet” and support myself. It was extremely difficult at my age, after 27 years of marriage, to live alone in exile. The reason of divorce also had to do with the interference of my in-laws. I brought shame to my family for getting a divorce. My own family insisted that I remain married; my father kept telling me to count my blessings for having children. I am blessed to have children, but this is not enough for a woman. A woman needs respect, love, and a lot more. In the beginning of

my life, I was not after money; I was after a man who loved me and respected me, but my husband never respected me. Maybe he loved me, but there was no sign of respect.

My sister had an arranged marriage, but she is very happy.

My childhood is interesting. I am the second child of the family, and, from the minute that I was born, my father's finances kept improving, and my family believed that I had brought the family luck and prosperity. Every Shabbat my grandmother, who was living above us, insisted to see me first . . . look at my face first, before staring at other faces in the family, because she believed I was a carrier of good luck, and my trait was contagious. My father also liked me in a special way, because I was peaceful, patient, and *matin, movagar*, very ladylike, very refined. I was a perfect model of daughter. A good daughter in a patriarchal system is one who obeys her father without asking any questions or ever saying "no." A dutiful daughter is not allowed to express her thoughts and feelings. My father was modern in many ways he had a solid backbone . . . spoke great French. My French friends were very impressed by his language abilities.

My mother was a distinguished lady with a very strong personality. Her children were her greatest assets in life. Even though we were living in a patriarchal society, my mother was very independent and did a lot on her own. On her own she would buy new carpets for the house, or she would trade our silver plates and get new ones. These were tasks of men usually, and I was brought up in a family, where my mother had some decision-making powers. It was difficult for me to tolerate the atmosphere of my own house, where, for the minutest thing, I had to ask for the permission and *nazar*, opinion, of my husband and my in-laws. This was very difficult for me.

As a result, I have a daughter, and when my daughter was old enough to get married, I advised her to marry a man who can give you a future. I advised my daughter to know a man, before she ties the knot, by traveling and living with him. I also told her she needs to have experience with men.

I believe that girls always seek their fathers in a man they choose to marry. Therefore, it is not unusual that my daughter, who had the opportunity to socialize and travel with her husband before marriage, unconsciously chose a man who has some of the personality traits of her father. I believe the role of the father and his behavior are important in a girl's life.

How do you experience your voice under patriarchy?

Lately, because I live abroad, and I have become independent, my relationship with my father has changed. I do express my opinion today. If I had a voice before the Persian revolution, to advise my father in his affairs, today my sisters and I could have had a better and more prosperous life. Unfortunately, during my time girls did not have the permission to brainstorm with their fathers. A girl did not dare contradict her father in any matter and tell him what is right or wrong. How many times I told him, "*Pedar Jan*"—dear father—"the political climate in Iran is very unstable, and I live outside. You are telling me the house in Tehran belongs to me. Sell it for me and send me the money." Each time he responded, "Are you asleep my daughter? I have enough wealth that seven generations after me can eat and spend." Not only did none of the generations after receive any of my father's wealth, he was penniless after the Persian revolution. He was forced to return to Iran from the States because his wealth dissipated.

My voice was also mute, when it came to expressing my love and affection for a man. I did not know how and what to say. I had not learned. I had not seen any expression of love between my parents, and I believe this is a big mistake. One needs to take courses and learn. Now I have learned, but now it is too late. Now I tell my grandchildren, my son, my daughter that I love them. I miss them, but at the time I could not express any feelings to anyone.

An aspect of my culture that I disliked and made me suffer a lot was that the Persian Jews "*farg ziad mizashstan*," they favored boys over girls. My father, after he lost the majority of his wealth, was of the opinion that once a girl has left her father's house, then she has no more right to his belongings. Interesting enough, my mother, who suffered from these discriminations, she herself discriminates. This is a hard pill for me to swallow, because it is mainly girls who cater to parents, especially as they age. My mother has very high expectations from her daughters and believes that a dutiful daughter's obligation is to cater unconditionally to her mother without being acknowledged. However, if her son does a minor favor for her, she broadcasts it to the world and makes it a big deal. She yells from the roof, "My son came and took me to the doctor."

If it was not for psychoanalysis, I would never have gotten a divorce. I went for such a long time, and it helped me to free myself and my children from bondage and flee. I was living in a villa, and financially I had a nice life. I had nothing else. I asked my son, at the age of 15, are you willing to leave the house with me. He said, "yes," and now he tells me, "Mom this is the best decision that you ever took in your life."

My voice has not always been mine. Unfortunately, the Persian Jews have learned to wear a mask and to live for other people. What do people say about us if we do this task or other? What is their reaction towards us? It—how do we appear to them—is important. Our own feelings and dreams are set aside and are not important. We need to live for ourselves, and we need to show and teach our children that our dreams and desires are of most importance.

How do you express yourself under patriarchy?

Je suis en colere, I am angry. I have always been a warrior under this system. From the day I got divorced it is 15 years. Everyone told me I have changed. I have a smile on my face. I am more open, I have changed, and maybe I felt I was released from a cage. My husband has been the only man in my life. I have not and will not have another man in my life. I felt I was in a prison, and if I had the right to make decisions, we would have been better relationship and a better financial standing. At times he would ask my opinion, but he did what he wanted. This is a big mistake. Successful men are those who consult their wives and listen to them. I did not exist. Of course, it depends who and how and what kind of woman.

How does *abroo* affect you? How do you experience your sense of self?

I have lived my life for others and for my *abroo*, but I have learned a lot from my son. I see that this generation of Persian boys and girls live their lives for themselves rather than pleasing others and keeping an image. In my opinion, what is taught in self-esteem classes—first me, second me, third me—has so much value. In a Persian

woman's life, these values are reversed: first is others, second is others, and third is others. By others I mean, first her children, then her husband, then her family, and then others and others . . . and she is zero. She counts as zero. I have never been for myself. I have always been concerned about my children: my sisters, my parents, my aunts and uncles. I suffered. At the age of 65, I realized I made a mistake and, from the beginning, I should have lived my life for myself. It is a big mistake not to esteem yourself, because if one does not esteem and value oneself, nobody will. This was a big mistake on my part. I neglected myself at the expense of others. Others had priority over my own self. It was first others, second others, and third others, meaning that I sacrificed my life for my children, my parents, and siblings. I was zero . . . reduced to zero as a result.

Do you experience any psychological symptoms under patriarchy?

God has given me a very strong personality, and I can adjust myself to any situation. All my friends, who live in dream-like villas, are on antidepressants, but I managed without pills, because I am a survivor and a fighter. I used to cry, and, at times, I was sad, and I had a hard time sleeping. I was also a bit anxious, and the doctor gave me some *calmant* . . . but not antidepressant. The purpose of the pills was to calm my nerves. I have always been against pills before being diagnosed with cancer. I hardly ever used pills. I used to stay psychologically sane by exercising, walking, doing yoga, shopping, buying myself a nice dress, getting a new hair cut If I feel that I don't feel good, I go shopping. I go and see a new movie. These are my antidepressants.

I saw many psychologists, and they all told me that the only way that I could save myself is divorce. I wanted to change my life. I wanted to remain married. I tried to

change him and myself and the situation, but, after 27 years of marriage, I realized that I am unable to change him, myself, or the situation, and, after seeing six psychologists, who were of the opinion that I should divorce . . . with the help of one of them, I left the house.

Many times during my marriage I thought of getting a divorce. A year after my marriage, I returned to Tehran, and I told my father that I can't be in this marriage. The reason was that we fought a lot, and we used to curse at each other. I was holding a lot of anger, and the fights were mainly about our families. My mother was against our marriage from the beginning, and my ex-husband used to blame me all the time . . . that your mother has brainwashed me against him. My answer to him was that, even if this was the case, you needed to prove the opposite by being a role model of a husband. I used to tell him that my mother's intuitions about him were right, and that he was not a good match for me. Of course, this led to conflict . . . to more bitterness. He still today blames my mother for his own shortcomings.

I believe that my mom might have had an effect on me, but I believe the reason I married this man and moved abroad was an escape from my father's house. I was living under the dictatorship . . . under my parents' rule. I thought, "in the States I will find freedom." I fell from *shleh* to *chah*, from a small well into a bigger well.

My parents were great parents, but my parents interfered in all our decisions. For example, if I wanted to buy a dress that I liked, my mother would disagree and would tell me to buy what she thought was proper for me. At times, we would go shopping with my dad, and we would buy two or three pairs of shoes and as many dresses as we liked and chose ourselves. To this day when my mother disagrees with the way I dress, and she

always criticizes me and states, “Is this the manner that you want to present yourself to the world?” My mom had a great style in Iran. When she went out in Tehran, everyone would stare at her. Her color coordination was great, and her bag, hat, her shoes, and her coats always matched. She dyed her hair *siah kalaghi*, very deep black. She always wore makeup. To this day, outside the house she is very well put together, but inside the house is another reality. Outside, people are very important, and so she tries to look her best for them. In the house she looks below average. I, on the contrary, if I am at home for the day, the minute I wake up, I put on my makeup, and I wear a decent dress. I look good at home and outside.

One of the disagreements between my parents was that my mom wanted to wear *decollete*, and my father did not like her to show skin. She was a beautiful woman—tall—and she looked great in whatever she wore and was admired by all. In contrast to my mom, I was very simple, and I liked to dress modestly, and maybe my mom wanted me to mirror her. So when I didn’t mirror her, she would become angry at me.

How do you express yourself under patriarchy?

I express myself through the clothes I wear. I always wore clean, simple clothes, and I didn’t necessarily need to wear designer clothes. I took pride in buying a nice dress at a modest price, and I told everyone where I purchased it from. I have a hairdresser that I go to, and every single Persian lady in Geneva asked me where I dye my hair, and now all my friends go to her. But a lot of Persian women try to keep a certain image by going to famous hairdressers; it gives them a certain status.

I used to see a psychologist, and she told me that the reason I combat cancer was that I took good care of myself.

How do you experience your sexuality under patriarchy?

I have killed all sensual and sexual feelings. I repressed it all. Nobody told me that women should enjoy their body and their sexuality. I thought sex was just a duty . . . for women to procreate. It was later, in reading books, journals, and watching television that I realized that I was totally off about this topic.

My father thought I was a chattel, and he kept telling my ex that I have a huge dowry. I told my ex, "If you want me, you accept me without a dime," and I left Iran without anything. After a few years, when I was pregnant, I accepted to receive my dowry. Later on I found out that throughout the years my ex, with the insistence of his brother, kept sending letters to my parents and asking for money.

How are you perceived by men under patriarchy?

Living under the patriarchal system made me a very insecure woman with low self-esteem and confidence. I devalued myself . . . looked down at myself, and, as a result of my low perception of myself, *az zendeghi agab mandam*, I am behind in life. My father valued education and because I was in a new country with a new environment and new language, and, maybe because I did not become fluent in the new language, my ex always bugged me, "You didn't say this or that right," and he believed and said that I would never amount to anything, and I would never learn. He would say, "no one will give you a job, no one will keep you anywhere." When I started to look for a job, I was

hired immediately, and I was in demand. I believe that, if I had a husband who believed in me, my life would have been better.

How do you perceive men under patriarchy?

Fear, respect: respect because he was my dad, fear because I did not want my ex to get upset and angry. When he became angry, he would hit the kids and me. In the beginning I would let him hit me, and I would be silent. In the end I was hitting him too in self-defense. I had no one to defend me. If he threw something, I would throw something at him. Of course, I learned to become assertive by going to therapy and defending myself. Before going to therapy, I would get hit and stay silent.

I voluntarily related my story—I believe my story is similar to the story of many Persian women . . . the destiny of many Persian women—in order to help the lives of our daughters, granddaughters, and the generations after. I want Persian parents not to discriminate between girls and boys emotionally or financially. I believe that we need to treat them both equally.

Camellia Interview

What is it like to be a woman under a patriarchal regime?

From a very young age you become aware of the gender differences and their power structure. The patriarch of the family holds the power, and the matriarch has no power. Under the patriarchal system women are devalued, and the feminine is dismissed. A Persian woman lives under the patriarchal mindset from her infancy to her death. She carries this mindset throughout her life, from her father's home to her husband's house.

The oppression of the feminine moves from one generation to the other. It creeps, not only through the psyche of women, but also of men. Unconsciously, women empower their sons, infusing patriarchal values in them, so that they in turn can dominate other women. The mothers themselves become the butchers of the feminine by devaluing the feminine and by living and breathing patriarchal values. It is known that mothers-in-law want to dominate and control their sons' brides, so they perpetuate the oppression of the feminine and talk negatively about other women or their daughters-in-law. They gossip about them in order to put them down. So, the oppression of the female not only infiltrates the world of men, it creeps into the world of women and affects the whole system.

When you are a young girl growing up, you see the difference between a powerful father and a powerless mother. Personally, I had a chance to empower myself through my education; that was my outlet. There are women who don't have that outlet; they definitely have no way out. They see their mothers being devalued, the feminine devalued, and they see no option of getting out of the devaluation. They marry a man with a patriarchal mindset leaving one patriarch, their father, for another patriarch, their husband.

As a child I almost became my mother's defender. I could see the undercurrent of what was going on, and resented the fact that my mother had to take the situation and did not have the power to stand up for herself. I saw my mother as powerless and wanted to identify with my father. So I am, in a way, my father's daughter. I lived from my neck up, and I did not get into my body, until much later into my life, when I went through a journey of self-exploration. My education and freedom allowed me to get in touch with

my body. However, amongst Persian women, the devaluation of the feminine—and her powerlessness—has created a dual scenario where Persian women either feel devalued, and they feel crushed, or they feel they have no power or choice. “I don’t have a choice; my hands are tight; I give up; I am the handless maiden; my hands are cut off.” This is really a negative force in women’s lives in Iran.

So, I lived from the neck up, meaning I was a kind of a linear being. Reason and intellect ruled. I was working from a power base, not working from a feminine place. When you don’t want to be like your mother, and you don’t want to be devalued like her, you turn and identify with the father who has the power. I spent a lot of time becoming educated and very intellectual about everything, and I pushed marriage aside for a very long time. I had the notion that marriage would be the end of me. I did not get married until I was 30. I went out with a lot of men, and I projected onto them the situation in Iran. In Iran, families arrange marriages; it is a family thing. They introduce their sons to you. I would project on these men the repetition of a life lived under patriarchy, and I absolutely did not want it, so I refused to get married until I was 30.

How do you experience your voice under patriarchy?

There is an outside voice that you project outside, and you express yourself, and there is an inner voice. The inner voice is the judgment voice that judges you always and makes life difficult. The inner voice always judges, because you have always been judged. As a result, this internal voice makes you feel as if you are the actor and the audience at the same time. This voice judges you all the time, and it is a fearful voice, because it rises from the violence toward women in a patriarchal system. If you are

raised in this system, you live in a cocoon of negativity with a fearful voice imposed on you by the patriarchal system. Your outer voice and your ability to express yourself depend on how much you were permitted to have a voice in your family of origin. I am sure that there are women who express themselves well, but the majority of women are voiceless. Women are often abused verbally in Iran and denigrated in Iran. There is a dichotomy within the inner voice. The inner voice either splits into a virgin, meaning a good woman, and a sexual woman, a morally poor woman. So, this inner voice constantly judges you and deprives you of your sexuality. The inner voice creates conflict. You are no longer entitled to your sexuality. The power of the inner voice is very restricting.

I am a huge introvert. As a child, there were signs that I was an extrovert, but patriarchy made me go inside myself. I had no venue to express my feelings, so I closed up more and more. I kept my feelings to myself; I concluded it was better to go inside myself and digest these things alone, because I knew that there was no room for it to come out. It is very deadening, because you feel you are not entitled to speak your truth, talk your truth, be your truth . . . and you go inwards. You suppress your emotions. I remember: right after college, I returned to Iran from the States, and I was invited to a social gathering. I observed that in social gatherings or family gatherings there was a division between men and women. Women socialized together, and men talked together. At a gathering, I tried to join the men's conversation and share my knowledge about a subject. I was completely shunned. The men literally turned to me, without any words, looked at me, and, with the expression of their eyes, conveyed to me, "what are you doing here? This is not a topic you talk about. Just shut up, and go enjoy the women."

In Los Angeles I boycotted the Persians, and I married out of the Persian community. I am pretty outspoken, and, if I have something to say, I say it now. I don't believe in repressing myself. Women's liberation in the States has allowed women to work and express their version of what is being feminine in the world. These events enabled Persian women who came here, to go through a journey of self-discovery and voice themselves. This was not the case in Iran. In Iran that was not my reality.

How do you express yourself under patriarchy?

There are two aspects of expressing yourself: you can express yourself intellectually or you can express your feelings. Regardless of the fact that my father shunned me for voicing my opinion, by asking me to leave the circle of men and join the women, telling me specifically, "this is not your realm go talk to women," I was able to voice my opinion in college in the United States. The voice I expressed was the intellectual voice, and my emotional voice was silent. I had repressed the expression of feelings, and I shied away from our patriarchs . . . Persian men, until I found a Persian man who was very much invested in my becoming whole. He was very much invested in me for voicing my opinion and my feelings. I started the journey of self-expression, but, unfortunately, the relationship ended. It did not last long. Unfortunately I ended up marrying a man that was very patriarchal, not from Iran . . . from the Middle East. It has been a deadening experience, feeling-wise. This deadening of feelings continued for a long time, and I tried to raise him out of his unconscious state and make him see that I cannot function under that power relationship. He changed eventually, but he took a lot

out of me. I have a vision of a painting by Frieda, where I literally gave a transfusion of blood from my being to this man in order to wake him up.

How does *abroo* affect you? How do you experience your sense of self?

There is a dichotomy in the Persian society, where what they represent to the outside world is not what they are in their homes. There are two distinct personas: a social persona and a private-life persona. Who they expose to the outside world is not who they are at home. There is superficial society, where truth is hidden. The concept of *abroo* means keeping face. It is keeping a falsely perfect image. It is what Persians are outside of their homes, in society, and a lot of honor is attached to these personas. The honor of a man has to be kept intact at all times. There is a deep, twisted social structure there. On a personal level, in my early 20s, I decided I was done with keeping *abroo*. The false image was no longer my trip, so I removed myself from Persian events. In my adolescent years, I did not want to participate in social events. There was no room for authenticity for me in such a social structure, and it was not a setting that I felt comfortable in. I did not want to be a part of it. It was deadening and false, and I could not deal with this falseness.

In Los Angeles, I tried to get away from Persians. There is an aspect of the Persian culture that is very deep and soulful. Iran went from a culture that was producing poetry and spirituality to a culture of repressing woman, covering them up and denying their rights. Islam changed the culture of Iran. Islam is a hugely patriarchal mechanism. Islam devalues women and allows men to perceive women as objects of their belonging. Under Islamic law, men are allowed to marry more than one woman and treat them like

dirt. I feel completely objectified under a regime where its leaders are religious men. This world was too narrow for me, and I could not see myself in it. In social settings I felt a sense of discomfort, and I did not want to participate in it.

As a young girl I did not fit in this world. Women are objects that men can pick and choose. Under patriarchy, you can express very little of yourself and your sexuality. It is a very limited system, and my goal was to leave this space. I knew that eventually when I became of college age, I would leave. It was complete suffocation. Under suffocation and covering up, I became completely introverted. I would spend hours in my room reading books and listening to music. My room was my world, so I was free in there. The moment the doors opened, I was faced with judgments and constantly told by people if I was doing right or wrong. It is a sense of being trapped, imprisoned, and annihilated. It is a very abusive system. The system does not allow women to blossom into their full being. Women's growth and development intimidates men, and it is a blow to their power. The patriarchal scheme represses the feminine, because men are afraid of that side of themselves.

It is a custom in Iran that, when young women come out of shower, or a bath, women chant blessings for them to get married. I felt objectified, and I resented that every time I stepped out of the shower, someone blessed me saying, "I pray that you come out of the shower of your wedding night." It felt like I was an object being raised for my wedding night. I felt I was solely valuable as a woman to be an object in a man's life. Women are raised in order to get married. As objects they are nurtured to become someone's wife. By themselves they have no value, and their role and purpose in life is

to serve men. The patriarchal values of being somebody's wife did not suit me. It didn't fit with me.

Do you experience any psychological symptoms under patriarchy?

Patriarchy is a disease. It obliterates women. It creates seclusion, impairs judgment, and therefore furthers seclusion . . . and upsets feelings because you are not allowed to be. Your feelings are invalidated and repressed. The process of invalidation is halted. I came in terms with not just swallowing always this negativity that comes towards you. There is a feminine light force. They definitely try to put a lid on it, and I felt that personally. Constantly they are repressing your being. It has been a constant theme, this feeling of not being alive; it is really big in me, and I have just realized it now. Not being alive is a deadening of feeling, and it's like not seeing your own truth, and it has had a completely deadening effect on me, even though I live my life. You can see, I lived my life in a dead way. I was not operating from wholeness. I was operating from a functional basis; I let things go through me. I was a complete container and harmonizer. I didn't give myself the right to be fully engaged on the outside. I just pulled myself back to a point of a minute level of aliveness and allowed a bit of light to go through me. I shut myself to the world of men; it is a very deadening, functional way of operating.

I wanted to be invisible. Eventually it had manifestations of closing myself up in my family and not wanting to be in the larger social sphere, and I am realizing how deadening that was, because it made me shrink, shrink, shrink, and go back to a place where I felt: this is the only small sphere, the smallest sphere that I can function in. I

related to nature, walking by the beach, enjoying trees and the flowers and the beauty of the universe, but the world of men, basically, I did not want to participate in it. My own little bubble did not have all this negativity; it just made me retract. Now, I am finally coming to the point where I want to have a social life.

How do you experience your sexuality under patriarchy?

You are either a virgin Madonna or a whore. Patriarchy did not leave any room for you to accept your sexuality, nor to express your sexuality. At the age of 21, when I became fully aware of this oppression, I decided to take my sexuality into my own hands. I decided to give up my virginity. It took me on a journey, and everything was going very well until I chose to marry a man with patriarchal values. The marriage deadened my sexuality for a very long time. In a relationship, sexuality is a reflection of what goes on at different levels: psychological and emotional. If you feel the patriarchal oppression, it deadens sexual feelings. You have this power, and it is projected on you and so on and so forth. It has a deadening effect, so personally it also . . . even having gone through the journey of allowing myself to be sexual and not having the projections, good and bad, based on my sexuality . . . no morality attached to that . . . but then having married somebody patriarchal and creating that situation in our relationship really did not create that desire for me to engage in a very deep sexual relationship. So, for a while, there was this way of trying to avoid it, which was very hard for my partner, until he started to wake up, but it took such a long time for him to wake up, and then for me to feel, "I have to restart this process." It was also very difficult. Patriarchy's effect on sexuality is huge.

You had to be one way or the other. There was no gray zone. Of course, I was trying to be what society had projected on me. I tried to be the good girl, went to college, did not date men . . . while all my friends were sleeping around and having fun in college. I just would not allow that in my life, because I felt I was not entitled to it, or it was wrong. All these things . . . and, finally, I got to see the extent of the projection that happens on women to carry morality, and I said I am not going to do that; I will step out, and I did.

Before liberating myself from all these projections, I wanted to cover up my body all the time. I wore black a lot so as not to draw focus to myself. I would never wear any clothes that were provocative and revealing of my body. I tried not to attract attention to my body. I was very intellectual and not a physical being. I wanted men to value me, to respect me and deal with my mind and not my body.

How are you perceived by men under patriarchy?

When I was a child, I heard comments about my sense of playfulness and leadership, and I was ridiculed for it, because it was not very feminine . . . very docile, and as I grew older and went through adolescence, I shut myself out. From their feedback, I developed a sense of invisibility. No one commented on it, but my parents realized I did not want to be out there, and they tried to take me to social events. My parents eventually gave up, because, wherever we went, I was so unhappy. I remember one time going to an event and sitting and crying in that event, and my mother said “you have embarrassed us.” I just didn’t want to be there. They forced me to go. Talking about *abroo* . . . they insist that you wear the mask and go to these events and show a

happy face. When I became educated, I went to America, and I had more sense of freedom. I created a situation where men were not allowed to objectify me. I made sure they heard my opinion in a way . . . to say I am trying to respect myself, so guys back off. Men who dated me were suddenly confronted with this woman who was not playing that role. It was an evolution.

How do you perceive men under patriarchy?

I went through years of being angry at them and resenting their sense of entitlement. I also decided I was a feminist, and I would make sure they heard me. A lot of men from my father's generation were not entitled to their feelings. They were on a male journey that was very restrictive, and I can see how patriarchy has also damaged them. It becomes a "catch 22" situation because, by trying to obliterate the feminine, they devalue their own feminine as well and disconnect from the feminine within themselves. I think it is an ego trip or a power trip for them. At the end of the day, I think it is a very incomplete way of being.

I see a lot of Persian kids in families right now . . . even though they don't live in Iran, patriarchy works through their families. The boys feel entitled to be obnoxious, almost arrogant and boisterous. They have an unjustified sense of validity to their being.

Unfortunately, the girls are caught between the messages they receive from their patriarchal culture and Hollywood. They are raised with mixed messages. In Hollywood, the feminine experience has molded women into dolls and playthings for men, to the point where women put in breast implants and have surgeries. Women go to the point of devaluing their essence in order to create a beautiful shell, a desirable shell

where they will be turned into a marketable quality for men. Eventually, the patriarchal influence is being perpetuated to the next generation.

“I had a dream recently . . . that I rescued a man from the top of a mountain that was tumbling, crumbling, and I brought him down to earth, and I was eating a round cookie. He took a piece of that, and he was very regal, very comfortable in his masculinity, and I was going to marry him, and I saw myself in a white satin wedding dress with camellias in my hair. Camellias in my hair are Billy Holiday. It represents a very mournful voice, mourning the journey that patriarchy imposes on women’s lives, the deadening effect it has had in my life.”

Yas Interview

What is it like to be a woman under a patriarchal regime?

I have to listen to all his requests all the time, and try to please him all the time. You must be submissive and you can’t express your own opinion, because whatever opinion you try to express, it triggers a fight. They like to be in charge of everything, and when they feel you are in charge, it bothers them a lot. They want to be the one who makes all the decisions; they don’t let you make any of the decisions. They don’t let you have any kind of freedom. When you want to go out with your friends, they think you want to go out with other men, or you want to do other stuff. They don’t think that you can go out with friends with no intentions behind it, just to have company. If you want to go out with a friend, you have to go with them, as a couple, and then they feel fine. They don’t like for you to have a life of your own.

The most difficult part is, the way I was raised, I had lots of friends from different backgrounds, from different places. It didn't matter to me, as long as I felt good with them and they made me feel good, we had a relationship. But with a Persian man, it has always been whatever is good for him, whatever he wants; then I feel I lose myself, and I forget about what I want.

At the beginning I tried to fight it, but then it was not worth it to fight, so then I let loose my identity and handed my identity to him. I used to like to go to theater, to go to museums, to read books. He never liked those things, and I stopped doing them, so we would go to places that he liked, and when I went to places I liked I felt guilty, and I stopped going. I felt guilty because I saw he was not happy. We were told that you need to make your man happy. So at all times, I wanted to do things that please him; but he still was not pleased, and he still wanted to do other stuff, and he still kept blaming me. Everything that does not work in his life is my fault.

So until I found this job I used to work with him, then one day I said, "I want to go and do something on my own," and he said "you will never find a job, nobody is going to hire you, nobody wants you, only me." I said, "let's try." When I started to work, I started to see myself coming back, because I would see myself through other people's eyes. I saw myself for 20 years through his eyes, always putting me down, always cutting me off, criticizing me. Whatever I did was never good, never enough. He always blamed me for everything, and when I walked into the world and I saw people complimenting me, telling me I am a nice person, telling me I am fun to be with, I would say, "oh my god, are these people crazy, are they talking about me?" Every day I had to hear criticism, every day I had to hide myself, had to not go out, not to take care of

myself. I became worse and worse every day, and every time I looked worse, he felt more comfortable, he didn't care. I was miserable; he didn't care.

When I started working, my boss told me that, "you hold your own power. You are the only person who can make yourself feel good. You can take care of yourself, only you can do it." My boss said, "no matter who criticizes you, no matter how much people put you down, you can be as beautiful as you can be, as nice as you can be, and nobody can take that away from you." He motivated me to go to the gym, to exercise, to diet; all through a simple compliment every week. She said, "good job, you are good, you are looking better, you are intelligent, and you are smart" My boss is a strong boss, and at times she criticizes me, but there have been compliments as well. I was so used to being put down, so used to being criticized 24 hours a day, that it feels weird to me when people are nice to me.

There is a world outside of patriarchy, where people don't judge you for what you do and like your company. This is something I discovered, and then I felt more confident about myself. I started talking to people; before I was very shy, I did not want to talk to people because I was afraid that everyone was going to criticize me. I felt all the criticism in the back of my mind. I was not a typical Persian woman; I am a bit "straightforward." I didn't like to make a show in front of people, I wanted to be myself. This bothered others, they wanted me to be someone else, they wanted me to be the woman who hid her feelings, who put on a mask that always showed she is happy, that her life is great, that there is no problem. So I did it for a while, and that is why I was so miserable. I did it for a long while, going out and smiling; and I still have to do it

sometimes. But now, for few hours a day, I can be myself. I work, and I have positive feedback from my employers, and my mind is working. I needed my mind to work.

When you are in that community, you have to be very superficial. You have to wear a certain outfit, you have to talk a certain way, and you have to act a certain way. You are not supposed to talk about your problems. You are not supposed to feel low . . . if you give parties, you are supposed to throw one as beautiful as the other person's, no matter how much money you have or don't have, you have to fit in . . . in the patriarchal society, you will be criticized, you will be put down, people will talk bad about you. You have to always say and pretend everything is good, everything is perfect, as if you have the best life. I have a lot of money, no worries, but when you have problems with money, you can't talk about it. It is like a disease for them, the first thing people ask you is where you live, what you are doing. They care about your financial status more than you. I always say I care about how I feel when I am with someone, how this person makes me feel, how can I talk to them and not feel bad about myself, and not be penalized because I am saying the truth. If you talk the truth to them, you lose points with them, you lose credibility, and this is very difficult. You have to maintain a certain image for everything and everyone, even for your own kids. When I go to meetings in school, and kids have drug problems, or any problems, we are supposed to hide everything and not admit that there is a problem. You have to be perfect for the community.

The younger generation of women is also living this nightmare; they reflect their mothers. They also want to maintain a certain image, they want to be the same as others. If someone has a car, all the other girls want the same car; they want to be like others and be part of the community. The girls that have been raised in this community will not be

like American women, they will be like Persian women. The Persian girls will learn to hide their feelings, not express them, to always be submissive, and to listen to whatever the man of the house tells them. Most of the time, even though the younger generation is going to university, and they like to express themselves in different ways, deep down they are doing the same thing as their mothers. The only difference is that they have less patience; they will leave their husbands earlier.

Persian men are very jealous and don't want you to do anything that is not part of what they are, like whatever you want to do by yourself, they are jealous of that. They think you might leave them. They won't let you have a life. But they can have a life. If a woman sleeps with a man she is a slut. They won't let you be you without thinking you will do something bad. They want you to be for them at home, waiting for them, and be available every time they call you. When women go out and have other responsibilities, it bothers them, because the women are no longer available to them instantly. When they ask for you, they want everything now, and they want you to be at their disposal. If you cater to them instantly, then they feel okay with you. They always say, "If you do what I tell you, everything will be fine. If you follow my instructions, there will be no problems and no fights." If you don't follow instructions, they will get mad, and there will be problems. It is always the woman's fault if they get mad. We women, we rebel but then we get tired and we surrender. If you don't let go, it will cost you your family, life, and sanity.

For me personally I don't have the self-confidence to go through it, to fight it. I don't want to fight anymore. I want to have peace, I always wanted peace; I want to avoid fighting, but sometimes I want to be myself. I want to do things I love. If I want to

dance salsa, I want to go and dance salsa. If I want to see a play, I want to be able to do so. I feel that in most of my life, I have to please him. When I want to please myself, it is so costly, because he gets so upset. I don't want to hear his complaints. Therefore, in a patriarchal community, women are trained to do whatever men want them to do, and women may rebel, but we aren't successful. If you have self-confidence you can fight and assert yourself, and say that it is my way or the high way. If, on the other hand, you like to have peace in the family and keep the family together, you have to do things his way. I did not want to make my parents' mistake again and get a divorce.

My husband knows how much I suffered when my parents divorced, so he uses this against me. Every time we have a fight he says, "Do you want to end up like your Mom?" to the point that I shake and I say, "No, I don't want to do that, let's do what you say." One time my husband said that his mom, who had been in the hospital for 3 weeks, really craved Persian food, and had not had Persian food. I said, "Well, who cares if she didn't eat Persian food? It isn't that important that she did not eat Persian food." When I said that he went mad, berserk, so crazy, I mean going to a state of madness. You wouldn't believe the anger, just because I expressed my opinion. To me, not eating Persian food isn't that important. There are people around the world that don't have anything to eat. He was so mad. My comment triggered so much anger, so much cursing, so many bad words coming out of his mouth, all because I expressed my opinion and it was not what he thinks. He felt that I was attacking his mom, attacking his way of life, attacking everything about him.

We Persian wives are very financially dependent on our husbands, and that is why we never want to leave, because we are scared to lose our financial stability; and we have

nowhere to go. If we go back to our parents, they will blame us for going back home, for not making it work. They will tell us it is our fault and that we are to blame. So it is going back to another kind of abuse; between this abuse and the other abuse I say, “well, I will stay with my family, better than going back to someone who will blame you for not making it work,” and that is why a lot of us women are stuck. We don’t have the courage to go and make more money to be financially independent. Women who can now financially support themselves are the ones who leave.

How do you experience your voice under patriarchy?

For me, I don’t have a voice. I am not allowed to express my opinion and it is not only during my marriage. Since I was small, I was not able to express my opinion. They shut me down, I learned to “shut up, don’t talk about it,” and the grown-ups use to tell me, “It isn’t true, it isn’t right, you don’t have the correct information, you don’t know anything, that isn’t the way you are supposed to be,” whenever I tried to express myself. I wanted to voice my opinion. I tried very hard, but I finally gave up. I gave up because whatever I wanted to say wasn’t the right thing to say. I wanted to speak the truth. I hated lies, and the hypocrisy that I felt in my community. I wanted to express myself freely, but people would shut me up and tell me “don’t talk,” or they would say, “This isn’t the way you are supposed to talk.” So then I stopped talking and expressing my opinion.

I now express my opinion by keeping a journal. I write about my feelings, and it is much easier than talking. The advent of technology has also made it easier for me to express my opinion. Via e-mail, I express and share my opinion with others. It is easier

for me to express my opinion in writing, rather than making eye contact. I am scared when I see the other person in front of me. I am scared of them judging me right away. When it is an e-mail or a letter, I don't see the reaction of others, and it is done and it is sent. It is a much easier way to express myself. Direct communication isn't effective for me. I want to communicate, but my point never comes across. So I stopped.

I always felt that I never had a voice, and a lot of times I was interrupted in middle of voicing my opinion. I was told, "*kafesho harf nazan*," meaning "shut up and don't talk." No one allowed me to express myself, from my immediate family to my husband's family and relatives. That is why I insist that my children have a voice. I let them express themselves, and it is hard on me because they lash out at me. I encourage them to say what they think. Because I felt so repressed, I didn't want my children to be repressed and silent, so I try to communicate with them. Sometimes, when they try to tell me something that I don't agree with, I try not to be reactive, I simply listen to them. I think it is very important to let people express themselves, and make their own choices. I don't like to tell them, "You have to do this, you have to do that." I like to let them experience their mistakes.

How do you express yourself under patriarchy?

The way you express yourself is by wearing clothes. You are supposed to be really well dressed when you go to a party, in order to protect your family's image. The way you rebel is to wear what you want, what you feel like wearing. Your clothes are the only weapons you possess to show who you are. When you cannot express yourself verbally, then clothes become a medium of expression. People will still criticize you and

put you down, but at least you sometimes show a glimpse of who you are; you make a point.

How do you experience your sense of self?

The first thing I would say is that there is no self any more; the self disappeared a long time ago. As I said, in wanting to maintain peace with the patriarchs I forgot about myself. For me, peace was the most important thing. I am not here anymore; part of me died hoping to be me. It stopped when I wanted to be me. Everything from my lifestyle, to my marriage and my community, made me disappear. When I started to go to work, a little piece of me started to reappear, but when that Me started to reappear, the fights began. That is why every time the Me wants to come back, it costs me so much that the Me disappears again. My biggest hope is that I will be able to keep a little of Me again so that I can start to live and enjoy life. I am like a candle that has never been lit.

Psychologists tell me that I am the most important person. They tell me, “you have to think about you.” I have to think about Me. I have to put Me above everybody else, rather than pleasing everybody. But when my Me appears, there is so much conflict to deal with. I don’t have the self-confidence and the courage to deal with the Me, and this is because of the upbringing that I had.

I never had any self-confidence, and I think that as a woman, you have to have more self-confidence to assert the Me. In the patriarchal system, husband and wife have no communication. They do not learn to communicate. Once you say an opinion that is contrary to their opinion, anger creeps up. There is no back and forth, like when you play tennis. You tell me your opinion, I tell you my opinion, and we have a normal

conversation like you have with your friends. But with your mate, you can't have that communication. They don't learn to communicate, and when you express yourself they get angry. No communication whatsoever. It is so important to be with someone with whom you can talk, share and have a voice. The Me, or the self, will appear when you talk and share freely.

How does *abroo* affect you?

In the Persian community, the most important thing to do is to keep *abroo*. *Abroo* is a nice polished façade, where you have a nice family and good finances. You need to throw parties, you need to take care of the house, and maintain a certain life style. If you have to go out of your way, go into debt, borrow money, or do whatever it takes, it doesn't matter, you need to keep that *abroo*. To keep *abroo* is the most important thing. For me, it was hard to understand why Persians do everything to keep their *abroo* intact. They will go to an extent that to me is unbelievable, just to keep their *abroo*. I know a couple who lost their *abroo*, or *abroo aroshon rafteh*. They stole money from people to maintain a certain lifestyle, a certain *abroo*. Somehow they were not able to save their *abroo*, and without *abroo* they were not welcome at parties.

When you go to a party, they first ask you where you live, which block, north or south? *Abroo* is living north of Wilshire, between certain blocks.

Abroo is when you throw the best party for your children. If you don't serve 25 kinds of food, *abroo rafteh*. You have to have a certain variety of food, even if nobody eats it. You have to show off that you serve sushi, rice, chicken, dessert, and have a full band as entertainment. You have to wear the best dress ever, and have it tailored. The

first question that women ask you in your party is “Where did you get your dress from? Where is it from?” You wear a dress only once. God forbid if you wear a dress twice. They will remember what you wore and ask, “Is this is the dress you wore at your son or daughter’s party?” In order to maintain *abroo*, you need to be perfect and come from a perfect family, otherwise *abroot rafteh*. Consequently, if you come from a broken family, *abroot rafteh*; if you are divorced and not married, *abroot rafteh*. Even for work, you have to have a job that has *abroo*. You have to be either a doctor, a lawyer, or an entrepreneur. If you work for the census and happen to knock on a Persian’s door, and if God forbid a Persian answers the door, you have to die, go underground from shame, for not having a high-paying job. For me this is very hard; I’d rather work hard and earn an honest living than steal people’s money. But for some Persians in my community, to steal other people’s money is better. If others aren’t aware of it, then they become rich and can keep their *abroo*. God forbid if I work at the department store, *abroot rafteh*.

I remember when I was doing a fund-raiser for my son’s school, the people in my community would say, “Are you working at Bloomingdale’s?” I would tell them, “No, it is fundraising,” and they would not believe me. No, they said, “It is okay, you can tell me if you work at Bloomingdale’s.” What is wrong with working in a store, as long as you are earning an honest life? They live in a fantasy world, this community, and half of them agree with me, but they want to follow the crowd. I am sure that some Persians suffer like me, and want change, but then again they don’t do it.

Do you experience any psychological symptoms under patriarchy?

The psychological symptom I experience most is depression. I feel depressed a lot of the time; it is a common symptom of hiding all your feelings, because you not able to express yourself. As an example, the interview I am doing today is prohibited; if someone finds out about it, they will hang me. We have mental disorders in our community, because we have to live a life of etiquette and protocol, with directions of how to be or how not to be. This leads us down the path of depression and disorders. We need to talk to people, confide in people, and trust each other. But we are not trained to talk to people, because we are supposed to hide our feelings and not express ourselves.

When you go to a psychologist, you don't give them all the information, because you are scared that they might disclose your secrets to someone else. Even with confidentiality laws, we are afraid to tell our stories, and we try to protect ourselves. Nobody is supposed to know that we are struggling psychologically. If we say we are struggling, they will say, "She is crazy, don't talk to her, you don't want someone psychologically disturbed." You don't want to be friends with somebody who one day is up, one day is down; you don't want to be with someone who is not happy. So you get alienated and more depressed, in this circle. There are lots of psychological problems. The Americans go to their psychologists once a week. They talk about their problems, they get it out, they get divorced, they get married. They have a lot of support groups; there are AA meetings they go to. Persians don't seek help, they don't go to these meetings, because they feel "*abroom raft agar inja yeki man ra bebineh*," meaning "my image will be tarnished if someone sees me here." They know that the other person who came there has the same problem, but they don't care. There are lots of problems, a lot of

baggage to carry, so heavy that people like me are falling down psychologically. Our society is omnipresent in this patriarchal community. I am afraid, I am scared, and I worry. I see lots of people with the same worries about the future, and I see lots of people with anxiety attacks, with their hands shaking.

Sometimes I experience headaches when I am really stressed, because I have a lot of things on my mind and everything is adding up, and sometimes my attention span varies. Like, for example, I would listen to you, and think about 20 other things in the back of my mind, and I would say “yes” to you, but have no idea what you told me, because I am thinking about all those things in the back of my mind. I have a lot of pains in body that are psychological in nature.

How do you experience your sexuality under patriarchy?

They tell young women not to pursue sex. You are not supposed to be touched until you get married, so every time you have a date with someone, you have to remind them “no, don’t touch me, don’t do this.” I got married later in life. All those years that I had all those dates, there were lots of occasion to have sex. I had to say no, because I was living abroad a lot of the time, and they would just leave me, because if I didn’t want to have sex, they didn’t have anything to do with me. Because there were 25 girls waiting that did want to have sex. So they didn’t want to waste time with me, and they especially didn’t want to marry me.

As a child, my mom put it in my mind, “Don’t sleep with someone, don’t do it till the day you finally get married.” When I finally did get married, they said, “Now go ahead and do it.” I felt bad, I felt I was doing something bad, because for so many years

they told me not to do it, and I was not sexual at all because I had all that repression for all those years.

I married a man who had sex with 50 women before marriage, and I had not had sex with anyone. I did not have a sex life before marriage, I did not have one with my current husband before marriage. So I did not know if we would be compatible sexually. For me, as a woman, I know that I am never going to know what good sex is, because the only sex I know is not great. I am told that it is my fault alone, because I am very cold. I was trained for so long to say “no.” My husband had very good sex partners, and he feels very deceived by me because I don’t take any initiative in bed. I don’t know how to deal with it. I just take it as a thing that I have to do, but not for pleasure. And I know from a lot of people that it can be a lot of fun.

How are you perceived by men under patriarchy?

Most men see the woman as housewife, as the person who is supposed to take care of the kids. The role of woman is to cook, take care of kids, give parties, entertain, and be beautiful. If you are not what they want you to be, there is a huge problem. Today, there is a big revolution in our community; a lot of women are looking for careers, they are studying. Men are beginning to see women differently. But most men’s comfort zone is to see the woman at home, as a wife and mother; women have to breast-feed the children. It is of immense importance to cook dinner for husbands at night, to look beautiful, to be the object of desire. The woman should be a desirable housewife, only for her husband. In society, I have to wear nice clothes and nice jewelry. My appearance is a reflection of my husband’s success. Persian men want their wives to

wear all the jewelry they have. The men want their wives to go to the hairdresser, to look as beautiful as they can, so that these men can show off their object of acquisition to everybody.

Our kids are going to be different, because the next generation, they are standing up for themselves. They are studying and having careers; they are having opinions. I think they will be different, in that we will see fewer housewives who spend 3 hours cooking in the kitchen. We will see more getting take-out. The typical Persian man likes the woman to cook. If dinner is not ready, they don't like it. Food is a very important part of their lives. I never dreamed it would be, because I love to eat, but it isn't the main thing for me in a relationship. I could eat bread and cheese, I could eat steak or a nice cooked dinner, it does not matter. For my husband, food is everything. I don't like to cook, and I feel so much pressure when I am cooking that my food does not taste good. I think the way Persian men are raised, it was to receive love through food. Their mom would say, "*ash, koresht,*" or "come eat."

The more difficult a dish is to prepare, the more they like it. Food for them is a symbol of love. A typical Persian man likes the woman to cook for him. So what brings confusion under patriarchy is when there is a lot of criticism, like one is under microscope, and then when one goes out in another community receives positive feedback about their cooking, their appearance, etc. And then you ask yourself, "Am I the same person who is wonderful at 10 in the morning and a piece of shit at noon?" Is it possible that in 2 hours my look, my face, my body changed so much? How can someone see the good stuff in me and at the same time someone else sees the bad stuff in me, and that someone else is my husband and my own patriarchal community? They are

always trying to see what is wrong with you. For example, if you lose your hair, they say, “What is happening to your hair, why do you have wrinkles?” If you gain weight, they ask, “Why did you gain weight?” and if you lose weight they ask, “Why did you lose weight?” When you go out in the world, people give you compliments and you say, “I don’t get it, I don’t get it. Can I change in few hours?” That is why we are very confused, why our state of mind is often very confused. There must be a balance between the two, and I don’t see where the balance is.

How do you perceive men under patriarchy?

The way I perceive men is not good. I feel that in a patriarchal community, they are very abusive. The way they treat you well before . . . they want to have you, so they treat you like a princess, they cover you with all the compliments and everything you want. Once they know you are acquired, they feel comfortable that you are going to stay, and they switch so much. I am not saying all men are the same, but my view of men isn’t the best. Because I see them as being much worse than they show in public. I feel they are very attached to their roots, to their family, and they are even willing to destroy a marriage to keep their own family happy. I feel they are full of criticism, never satisfied with anything, and I see this in a lot of men around me, it isn’t just my husband. I see a lot of men putting their wives down in front of everybody, criticizing them when they don’t do things right, even making fun of them. I don’t like it, I don’t like the way they treat women. Even when they treat women well, it is very temporary. Most of the time they are finding something wrong with women, and always blaming everything on them. So I don’t have a good view of men around me.

Persian women try to find something they like, they love do things to find themselves, to not always take abuse. As far as sexuality, they aren't supposed to enjoy it. But they try to find themselves and discover things. They might spend an hour or two a week doing something only for themselves, when they are not thinking of all their responsibilities to the family, or the mother, sister, brother and 250 other people. If you like to paint, sing, or take a dance class, do whatever it is. Take time from your family; but most women, they don't do it. They are so lost in their identity that they don't do it. It is a pity. I am one of them.

Maryam Interview

What is it like to be a woman under a patriarchal regime?

I am from a cultured family. My father and my uncle went to German schools in Tabriz and learned French and German concurrently. In our home, boys and girls were treated equally. I remember my mom had the same expectations from her girls and boys in completing their daily chores such as arranging their beds.

In Iran at the time, on the surface, big steps were being taken toward modernity and equal rights for women, such as cooperation and inclusion of women on social issues and events. In the social scene, women were beginning to emerge as lawyers and senators. But as you, I, and other therapists know, the collective unconscious of a nation and the cultural/historical *rosobat* (deposit) is not something that can be changed with social laws. The deeply layered unconscious and conscious experiences of centuries of patriarchal rule have remained with us.

I validate this statement by a dream that I had a few years ago. In the dream, I saw my grandmother who had just arrived from a trip to Mecca, in a yellow cab. The cab had stopped in front of the house, and as my grandma was stepping out of the cab, my brother, cousin (male), and I ran toward the cab to welcome and greet my grandma. We were elated that she had returned from her journey. Grandma had two suitcases, and one suitcase was new and really nice, the kind you see in American and European airports. For Persians, new Western-style suitcases were a symbol of modernity, the people who used these suitcases were people who were *sareshoon beh taneshoon miarzeh*, people who were important. So, these suitcases were symbol of being worthy and distinguished; as Persians, a nice European suitcase also protected our image in international airports.

One of my grandma's suitcases was modern, and the other suitcase was like most Middle Eastern suitcases, those from Arabic countries, and India. There was a big rope tied around the Middle Eastern suitcase, and few Arabic words were written on it. In my unconscious mind, an old Middle Eastern suitcase is a sign of backward nation, not in tune with modernity and advanced countries. These suitcases are usually very big, so full that the zipper is usually broken, and a rope or a tape is wrapped around them to protect the contents inside from falling out.

In my dream, Grandma had two suitcases, and one was the nice one and the other *dehatieh*. In my dream I ran to get the nice luggage from Grandma, because it also had rollers in order to help her, but Grandma stopped me by putting her hand on my chest, and gave the nice suitcase to my brother and my cousin. She then gave me the broken suitcase that I did not like. I experienced a moment of disappointment in my dream, but I tried to fool myself. Fooling ourselves is something that we women of the East have

learned to do often. I tried to fool myself, and in the dream I tried to believe that there are better things inside the old ugly suitcase.

In the dream we all came in the house. I was still disappointed, and grandma asked us to open the suitcases. When we opened the suitcases, my cousin's suitcase was full of men's *dampayee*, or slippers, like the ones here in Nordstrom, and some men's cologne. I quickly opened my suitcase and I found a bunch of old, ripped, disgusting women's *dampayee*. I was so disappointed and *maouse* in the dream, that I pushed the suitcase away and I remember I stopped talking to Grandma and I went to another room.

I like to work on my dreams and their symbols, so as soon as I woke up I tried to process the emotions first. As I sat to think, I remembered the times that we grandchildren would visit Grandma's house. I remembered that I didn't like to go to my maternal grandma's house, because I somehow felt that girls were treated as second-class citizens. A good example is how our grandma served us all breakfast. She would divide *paneer* (cheese) and *barbari* bread, plus butter and jam, amongst us all. Every time this happened, I remarked that the portions served to the boys were larger. Their slice of cheese was larger, as were their portions of butter and bread. We were all the same age, except for a few of the girls who were older. I remember this issue bothered me. Once or twice I mentioned to grandma, "Why is Morteza's bread larger?" Or "Why his portion of butter is bigger?" Morteza was my younger brother. My grandmother's answer was, "they are boys."

I never understood why boys should get more. I know my feeling on this issue was not a positive feeling. Another example is how in those days, they would cut watermelon in *shotori*, meaning they would cut from the side corners with a knife in thin

sheets, and they gave the slices to the children to eat. I remember that I was very sensitive to the slicing of the watermelon, because the center, or *gol* of the watermelon, was considered the best part of this fruit; it was reserved for boys. Grandma used to part the watermelon, gave the crown to boys and the parts with the seeds to girls. I remember clearly that once, when grandma handed me that part in her presence, I threw it to the floor. Instead of understanding me, Grandma called me crazy. I clearly knew I was not crazy. I was wise and sensitive, a kid that looked into everything with depth. Therefore I did not internalize the crazy *deevoneh*. I was happy that I could make her angry.

So after the suitcase dream I thought that discrimination, in giving the good things to the boys and ignoring the girls, was part of Grandma's pattern of behavior. As a child I remember my grandma as a being very progressive and modern in behavior and thinking. She wore a European hat and went to dance classes. Yet she had double standards. She valued boys more than girls. I remember other discriminations by her. As children, if we wanted to play climb the tree or climb the donkey, it was okay for boys but not for girls. And when I would question why I wasn't allowed to climb on the donkey, she would reply, "girls don't climb on horses."

How much of this discrimination was instilled in me? How many of these occurrences had I experienced against men or women? Another story is very important for me. I had an older brother who passed away at the age 7, when I was 5. I was very close to my brother, and I think the biggest trauma of my life was the loss of my brother, because not only did I lose my brother but I also lost my mother to depression. After his death, the mom who used to sit and play with me did not exist; my mom no longer had any patience for me. But what I remember most about this tragedy, which I explored in

therapy and which was important in my therapeutic process, are the days of chaos and sadness that came when the toys that my brother and I used to share began to disappear, because they reminded my mom of my brother. Also, when I mentioned my brother's name, someone would grab my mouth, hold my mouth tight, and prevent me from mentioning his name. It was a traumatic experience.

But the worst was a conversation I overheard at the age of 5, and the memory has remained with me. When I was 22 years old, I was a PhD student, and I went through my own psychological analysis, the one thing that remained with me was this conversation at the age of 5. Our house keeper was talking to my grandma, and of course she was an illiterate villager, she was telling my grandma "ay kash . . . bejay . . . mordeh bood," meaning, "I wish she would die instead of" And of course I remember my grandma told her, "enshalah zaboonet lal besheh," meaning "I hope you become mute." When I asked myself why she made such a comment, the issue of gender came to my mind. The thought that boys were more valuable than girls emerged. Another thing that I remember from my childhood was that even though, on the surface, I was born and raised in a household where my parents did not discriminate between girls and boys, I would feel that discrimination was in the air; the sense that boys are better than girls was ubiquitous.

One other experience marked me when my brother died. Our family had two girls and one boy, and that one boy died. My mom was pregnant at the time, and 6 or 7 months after my brother's death she gave birth to another boy; so if we wouldn't have lost that brother, we would have been two boys and two girls. After the loss of my brother, everyone was eager to find out the gender of this new baby. I remember clearly when he was born, they did so many things that to me were sweet and sour. I was happy

we had a baby boy in our family, but that sense of specialness and the attention that was given to him was not pleasant. After him, a sister was born, and we became a family with three girls. My mom once again became pregnant and gave birth to another boy. I remember being about 8 or 9 years old. My grandma asked me to give the news to my grandpa, who lived only couple of blocks away from us.

Grandpa was sick and in bed when I got there, and I told him that Grandmother asked me to give him the good news that the baby is born; grandma said “bro be baba *mojdegany* bedeh keh baby bedoniah amad.” When I said to my grandpa, give me a *mojdegany*, or gift, my grandpa said, “I won’t give you a *mojdegany*, first tell me if the child is a boy or a girl.” I teased him, I said a girl. My grandfather, in disappointment, said “again another girl,” and I changed my mind right away and I said, “No, it is boy,” and he did not know what the right answer was. He told me that if I told him the truth about the gender of the baby, he would give me a nice gift and he showed me a new “*eskenas*” of two tomans and said, “joon Baba, if you tell me the truth I will give you the two tomans.” I said the baby is boy and he got out of bed and kissed the ground and said, “Thank God that Monir has two sons now.” This whole experience was very painful for me. I took the two tomans and I bought two ice creams. But the pain remained with me.

The first thing you experience in patriarchal societies is that women are less than men. There are so many stories of men who marry a second wife because the first wife only gives birth to girls. This is a low level of acceptance and self-worth for women.

At the level of social interaction, boys did so much that was forbidden for girls. I would always question that. I remember when I was 12 or 13 years old, my parents bought a bicycle and a tricycle so my siblings and I could all share. Yet they forbid that

girls ride the bikes in the street. I would always break that rule. I was a rebel. I don't remember other experiences of gender differences, because I went to high school and then university. I don't remember much until I married my husband, who was the only son in his family, and I heard horrible stories from my sister-in-law of how their mother worshipped this boy. I could feel and notice that my husband had a huge sense of entitlement, which supported my sister-in-law's statements. When I confronted my mother-in-law and asked her why she spoiled her son, she responded that when her son was born, it was the only time that her husband became happy from the birth of his children. She stated that when she gave birth to girls, her husband would "*gahr*," would stop talking to her for days.

I graduated and returned to Iran, and I was hired at a university. It was in my new job that I felt the masculine power trying to dismiss the feminine power, and these were men who had high degrees from the States or elsewhere. When I started working with them, I realized that they were totally trying to dismiss me. Power was like the wind or air with which the men played *dasreth* (dodgeball). Because of my qualifications, I became the chairman of the Department of Psychology. Overall, at the time, there were 23 PhDs in the pool of psychologists. The first thing that the dean of the college told me was that I got there because of my qualifications, but he also warned me of two things, saying "You are going to work against two challenges; one being a woman, and two being so young. You are only 29 years old, and you need to be careful."

The Persian revolution provided those who didn't want me to be the chairman with a good excuse to sack me. Their excuse was that I was not a good Muslim, that I did not obey the Islamic laws by praying five times and wearing the *Hejab*, the veil. In Los

Angeles, they accused me otherwise. They labeled me as an agent and a spy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. During the revolution, they dismissed me from university because I refused to wear the Islamic scarf and I did not pray. The truth was that men fought me on many fronts. They had ganged up against me before the revolution, and during the revolution the same men found the opportunity to push me and other women aside.

The bigger and more important question, in my opinion, is how much of this social/cultural belief is internalized in us as women, and how we pass it on to next generation. In my clinical work I saw so many women who did not like themselves. I started a course here to empower women. I taught it many times and I made CDs of it. A lot of that demeaning social discrimination is internalized in women, and it has become a part of us. This is exactly why women love their sons more than their daughters, and this is the reason Persian women become discrimination agents.

Of course, religions play an enormous role in these matters. You are Jewish, and you know the discriminating laws in Judaism. I am Moslem, I know the discriminating laws in Islam. Why does a woman have to inherit half of what a boy inherits? In Islam, boys inherit twice as much as girls. I wonder how it works in Judaism. A woman's witnessing a crime as big as homicide has no value, but one man witnessing the crime is enough to condemn the accused criminal, even if that male witness is mentally disturbed. A thousand women have no value. However, it only requires one man to stand witness and report a crime. A woman cannot even travel without her husband's permission.

I am so happy that when I was getting married, my father put certain conditions and requests on the table for my husband. The first request was that I remain a student

and continue my education. The second condition pointed to the right of divorce, meaning when I was no longer happy in the marriage, I could legally leave. The third condition was that I was allowed to work as long as I wanted. In exchange for all his conditions, my father did not ask for a *mehrieh*. He remarked that as his daughter I was educated, and I was able to work and support my life. He was a very open-minded man, my father.

I had two aunts who always prayed and blessed my father. Their father passed away when they were 16 years old. My dad became the head of the family. At the time, the two sisters were in elementary school. One day my uncle, who was 2 years younger than my dad, decided that my aunts had to stop going to school because they were girls. He believed that education for girls was unnecessary and girls had to dedicate their lives to learning household chores. My aunts loved to go to school. One day my father, observing that my aunts were sad and silent, inquired why they were sad. The two aunts answered, "We are sad because brother Ali threatened and forbid us to go to school." Ali had threatened to shoot the aunts with his gun if they went back to school. Ali, my uncle, was a hunter and had a gun. My father immediately told my aunts to wear their school uniforms and told them, "I will take you to school." My father stood beside my aunts that day, declaring "I want to see who will prevent me from taking you, my sisters, to school today, and I want to know who has the guts to shoot you." Then he took the two sisters to school. He informed his younger brother that as long as he is alive, my uncle needed to obey his rules or he was free to leave the house. I remember my aunts always reading poets such as Sady and Hafez, and always blessing my father for defending their

rights. Without my father, they could have never gone to school and finished their education.

How do you experience your voice under patriarchy?

I spend most of my time in the United States, and I witness how in our daily lives, Persian men still dominate the scene and women are in the background. For example, in Persian television stations that are abroad, we don't have a woman manager, a person like Homa Sarshar, who is by far one of the best television producers in this town. Whenever she steps too far into radio or television stations, men try to dominate her, and she quits.

In America, I don't feel any discrimination because of my gender. I have a very private professional life. I wonder what my experience would be if I were to work in corporate America. I hear from my American friends that they get pushed around because of their gender.

I had a very strong personality. I felt male dominance and discrimination, but I never gave up. Because of my capability as a professional, I never gave up. I was teaching, and I was the dean of the Department of Psychology.

As a girl, I would feel like a second-class citizen, but somehow there was something inside me that would look at society's stupidity and its shortcomings. Maybe it was because my grandmother, whose picture as you see is hanging in my office, adored and admired me. I was her favorite, and she always repeated that I was apple of her eyes, and her wisest grandchild. My grandmother always called me *naveh vaziram vazir*, which is prime minister or first minister; it also means someone wise. She meant that I

was wise and intelligent, and Persians call a person who has wisdom *folany agel vazir dareh*.

As a child, I didn't feel that I could fight, but I did not feel helpless. For example, when we went to *nonvaye* to buy bread, I felt more helpless being a child than being a girl. Children were dismissed. When we went to buy bread, the *nonvah* (breadmaker), his name was Shatter Agah; he would first serve the elders who came to buy bread, and when we would say it was our turn, he would say "be quiet kid."

In school I was always an outstanding child, I had so much confidence. There was something inside of me that was very valuable; I never felt like a person of no value. Even when the Islamic Republic kicked me out two weeks later, I got an office in Tehran, and my salary was four times what I was getting in university.

If you ask my husband what is the significant characteristic of Marym? He would say she is fearless. I attribute that fearlessness to the encouragement and confidence I received from my mom and my grandmother.

However, one question always remained in my mind, which was why boys had to choose us as we approached the age of marriage? I remember I chit-chatted and confided in my grandmother. Once I told her that I liked Kamaran, our neighbor, and my grandma gestured with her finger and said *shash*, be quiet, "girls don't say they like boys, and girls must do what boys want them to do." I would always ask, why? I never understood why we can't choose our partners, why they have to choose us.

There is a joke between me and my husband; I say "since you did choose, since you came to my *kastegari* one day, if I leave you, I will choose the man of my dreams." Obviously, I am just joking, because I picked him over other suitors, but nevertheless I

always tell him. Every anniversary I tell him “you survived another year.” I have been married for 40 years. I married when I was 22 and now I am 62. He says I am a lucky woman.

How do you express yourself under patriarchy?

Except for the sexual part, I have always expressed myself in every *mehmoony*, in every situation. I can be part of the guys’ group, because I find conversations about politics and about the economy more interesting.

I don’t like to be part of the feminine chit-chat about designers, shopping centers, and the discount stores. It is not in me, maybe because I am Sagittarius. I am a philosophical thinker, and I have determination. I express myself freely, except sexually.

How do you experience your sexuality under patriarchy?

For years I learned to suppress it or hide it. One experience of mine, around the age 12 or 13, when my boobs were growing, was when I was playing with my friends, boys and girls, and my uncle who was coming to our house said “*doktar wagty pestonash dar miad digeh ba pessar basy nemikoneh,*” or “when a girl grows boobs, she no longer plays with boys.” So I learned to tie my boobs when I played with boys. I loved to play, and I was taught that my boobs were an obstacle.

I remember I disliked my boobs growing because I did not want to give up the *bazy*, and the second thing I did not like was when stupid guys would pinch me. I remember I always held my books in front of me to hide my boobs when coming and going to school. Most girls would do the same. They held their books in front of their

boobs. I remember one spring day I was so happy, the alley in which I was walking from school was fragrant with jasmine, and suddenly a guy from nowhere told me, “*mano bebin*,” meaning “look at me, look at me.” And when I looked at him I saw his private parts. This was a first time I was seeing a huge, big thing. I remember I screamed, and I knocked at the next door. I don’t know what door I was knocking at, I was seeking help. The guy ran away, but I remember when I got home that image stayed with me. It was so disturbing, and I could not talk to anyone, because I thought I did something wrong.

I think it is very normal for Persian women to not be comfortable with their sexuality, with their sexual feeling and sexual expression, because it is considered bad. My little granddaughter, who is 3 years old and has a twin brother, sometimes calls me and says “Nessy, come look at my little penis.” She calls her vagina “little penis” and she is so comfortable about it. I tell her you have a beautiful *naz*, or vagina. She tells me “do you want to touch it?” and I say “No, only your doctor and your mom when she is putting powder or Vaseline can touch it.”

How does *abroo* affect you? How do you experience your sense of self?

The culture of *abroo* . . . first of all, I define *abroo* differently than most Iranians. To me, *abroo* has two definitions. One definition is very close to what it is called in English. It is called honor and integrity. In that sense, I cherish that concept of *abroo*. The second, negative definition for *abroo* is pretension, and face-keeping to the point of fooling and deceiving others. So then *abroo* is used for deceitfulness. I have been fighting that at least in my adult life. You have seen me talking very comfortably in a social setting. I don’t always follow dress code, and for instance when my daughter had a

boyfriend, everybody knew. People used to tell me that I should be concerned about my daughter, that she was too young to have a boyfriend in public. I did not care. I really did not care.

And my son didn't want to go to graduate school, he wanted to open a store. He wanted me to help him. I used to go to the little shop and help him, and some of these Iranians used to come and see me there. They were shocked, and my mother would say, you don't think about your *abroo*, you "*dam magazeh in bache waymisi*," you work in his shop without thinking. I did not care. In our family, we have all doctors, so for my son it was a brave thing to make the decision to not go to graduate school, but rather to do what he wanted to do, to live his life for himself and not for others.

Do you experience any psychological symptoms under patriarchy?

Of course, in a patriarchal society such as Iran, being feminine means being permissive and passive, with low self-esteem. It means being fearful and swallowing so much shit just to have a shadow of a man over your head, unless the woman has financial independence and a good head on her shoulders. Among Persian women in my work, I see depression, self-hatred, social isolation, passive aggressive anxiety, histrionic borderline tendencies, and hypervigilant narcissism.

Have you experienced this yourself?

After the Iranian revolution, I experienced anxiety and depression. I remained in Iran 6 years after the revolution. That was a period of time when male dominance was very prevalent in Iran. I was not independent in social settings. I had a private practice,

and I had my family. I felt helplessness when I was living under this political hardship, because I was a human rights activist, and I was an active member of the society for freedom and sovereignty. Of course there was large sense of helplessness, when the government attacked our humanitarian centers and us. They attacked my private life, and I was monitored by revolutionary guards for so many years. They abused me verbally as well. I remember one time I was walking out of a meeting and two revolutionary guards, they said “*jendh dafeh degeh agar amady dar in jalesat lasheto mindaszim toy kiaboon,*” or “whore, next time you attend these meetings we will throw your corpse in the streets.”

I remember something inside me was boiling. Even though I am against aggression, in that particular moment I wished I had a gun to shoot the *Basijis*. I went through military service in the shah’s time; I knew how to shoot. I had military training because when I went back to Iran I was only 20 years old, and women under 30 had to go to military service. I was stationed at *sepah behdasht*, and there I learned how to use a gun, how to fight in the battlefield as *sotfan*. I was awarded two stars; I have pictures of those years.

Instead of being a helpless woman at the moment that the revolutionary guards called me *jendh* (whore), I wish I was a strong, tall, martial-skilled woman who could knock those two animals down. They were so disrespectful towards me for no reason. I was just coming out of a meeting and they did not like that. This is my fantasy of power, a dream of power.

How are you perceived by men under patriarchy?

I was perceived as not very feminine, strong and straightforward, not very attractive qualities for Persian women. I was told that I don't have *naz gamzeh zanha ra nadaeri*. My answer to men was, "*madar gaveha koshetoon biad*" (I am happy, I don't need you guys to cherish me).

Do you think that you hid your femininity under a masculine mask?

I have had few experiences with very civilized intellectual guys in my life; around those people I become so feminine, with such a strong sense of humor and a feminine touch. One of them told me, "Your vocabulary is a feminine vocabulary, civilized, educated, and soft."

The feminine language is the language that I express myself with. The feminine language is a safe, civilized, soft one that you feel secure and well respected with. It is the language of trust; it is used when you trust a man. The other language is to protect, to defend, and set the boundaries with guys. It is a harsher, more offensive language. I call it my masculine language. It is a language that you don't feel safe with. It is the language that is used when you don't trust a man.

How does it affect your body language?

I remember most of the girls in their growing years, they would bend their shoulders up to a point that some of the teachers would say "open your shoulders." It was a protective gesture, in a society where the adolescent years are filled with fear and blame. In my opinion, the body language was and is defensive and passive-aggressive.

How do you perceive men under patriarchy?

If you asked me that question 30 years ago, I would have held them in higher esteem, and I would have competed with them. If you ask me this question now, I see them as very vulnerable stuffed tigers. They look like tigers, but cannot bite and cannot hurt, if you contain them. I definitely find women more sophisticated, more skillful in the art of manipulation, in the sense of how to mold behavior. The weaker a man feels inside, the more powerful and aggressive he acts. A good thing about aging is that you see things as they are, you see men as they are, and not what they try to sell you. In my perception, men are more vulnerable now, and next to them I feel powerful.

Lily Interview**What is it like to be a woman under a patriarchal regime?**

As a teenager I recognized the disparity between men and women in my country, Iran. This awareness was reinforced by reading, in my teenage years, the works of Ali Shariati. I remember clearly that he talked about the equality between man and woman. As a teenager, I felt that Shariati's work was very revolutionary. I was already experiencing the lack of equality between the genders at this tender age. I lived in Iran through my adolescent years. I remember reading Shariati's work, and I felt—wow—somebody understands that men and women are equal, because I sure enough didn't feel that I had the same opportunities, or the same privileges extended to me as a male counterpart in school.

At the time, when girls were sent to girls school, I was sent to a mixed elementary school. A mixed school was very unusual and uncommon in Shiraz. Usually, schools catered to boys or girls. As a young girl, I felt that there was a double standard, especially in the family I grew up in. We had different dress codes for boys and girls. For example, I was forbidden to wear a sleeveless dress, because I was supposed to be a modest, good, Persian-Muslim girl. My father was strict about that sort of thing, and I felt the disparity everywhere. It wasn't just in the way I dressed. In school I felt that, even though I was a straight-A student at the top of my class, there was always the tension of feeling less than boys. Even in elementary school, I felt the . . . I remember this boy who was pretty advanced in studies, and today he is a scientist in Australia. I found him through the internet, and even to this day, I feel a little bit inferior to him. Even though I am getting my PhD in clinical psychology, I still feel competitive with him. I still wonder who is more equal. It is almost like equality has become about competition. This is how I experience and have experienced the patriarchal system. There was this double standard, and a sense that you always had to make sure you are as good as the boy who is next to you, in accomplishment and achievement.

In terms of my personal life, the way I dressed had to be a certain way, repressing my sense of sexuality as a woman. I experienced it as *tabiz*, meaning discrimination. I felt as a girl, there were different standards for me. It felt that women were always in the background, no matter how brilliant they were, or how good they were, or how kind they were. No matter how they are, they are always sort of in the background. They are not quite seen for who they are, and I interpret this phenomenon as being a female.

I think it is like a dichotomy. I was not seen in the areas that I wanted to be seen in, but then I was seen too much as a sex object, as a pretty little girl. So, it was kind of . . . that also made it harder, and that is very emblematic of a patriarchal system. I remember, one time, we were at an outing with a group of people and their families, and I happened to be in a bathroom that had no lock, and this boy dared to open the bathroom door on me, knowing well I was in the unlocked bathroom. I felt so embarrassed and ashamed, and I thought this is the kind of thing that little boys are allowed to do. In a patriarchal system this kind of behavior is exaggerated.

Yes, I was not seen for my achievements or for maybe . . . for my academic achievements. I was seen in other ways. Everybody noticed how pretty I was, and how cute I was. They wanted to dress me up, and get my hair all done. For me, it was hard. This is unique to Iran, or the patriarchal system in Iran, and I think in places like Iran maybe there is a cultural bias that we have towards boys and girls, but I think in Iran it is exaggerated. As a result I turned out to be a tomboy, a rebel. I rebelled against all of what I didn't want to be. I decided boys are better so, I think unconsciously, I wanted to be like a boy; I tried to hide my femininity by blending in with boys. I took succor in the neighborhood with the boys. I did all the boyish things, dressed like boys; I always had my hair in a ponytail. When I was more like a tomboy, I was still being seen as a girl by boys my age. But somehow I felt better; somehow I felt more shielded; that I am not such a girly girl. I developed this other part of me: the tomboy complex.

I had certain privileges in the family system in which I grew up. I was the first child; I was also the first grandchild, and I had many uncles that were very close to me in age. It felt like I grew up with five uncles in the same household. These older uncles of

mine were anywhere from 4 years older, to 12 years older than me. They could have been my brothers, and I felt the privileges were different for them, and they were treated differently. For instance, I remember my aunt . . . my mom's sister, who was about 18 years old. She wanted to go to a prom or a party of some sort. She could not go alone. She needed to be accompanied by one of the male figures of the family. She had to have a chaperone. Boys in our family did all sorts of things: they stayed up late; they crashed cars into trees. In the family system, boys ruled the roost. They were like the king of the hell, and women were sort of subjugated to certain roles. Our parents and our brothers, certainly the male figures of our family, made sure we behaved well, because we had to have suitors. In order to have suitable suitors and marry well, we were not allowed to go out by ourselves, or our reputation would tarnish, and we would be seen as loose girls that no one would want to marry. I saw the discrimination in the gender roles in my own household, as well as in the Persian society at large.

In society . . . I was 12 when the revolution happened. There was a collective psychosis, and the patriarchal mullahs succeeded to establish their authoritarian rule. They immediately forced women to wear the *hejab*. The dress code for boys changed as well, and they had to dress modestly, but nothing as drastic as girls covering themselves from head to toe. I remember one thing that really bothered me was that before the revolution, I passed the entrance exam, and I was accepted to the university high school, which was a mixed school. I had started the year when the revolution happened. After the revolution happened that year, they separated the boys from the girls, so we couldn't go to school together.

Then they gave the main campus—which was this beautiful . . . many acres of green gardens with very advanced laboratories and a basketball court—to the boys. They relegated us girls to a campus on the lower part of town, almost to *jonob shar*, south of the town. In this old campus, which was used as an orphanage or something, I don't even know what it was before. This location was not even comparable to the other campus, which was much more modern. Therefore, girls were relegated to a tiny campus with old classrooms, where everything was so antiquated. It was so unfair. This was in my city, Shiraz. As a consolation prize, they let us go to the main campus two afternoons during the week and use some of the laboratories. It was hard to witness that boys had so many privileges and that we girls were so deprived. We didn't have privileges like boys, things that went without saying.

I lived both in pre-Shah and post-Shah Iran. I was 12 when the Revolution happened. The attitude towards women became worse, and women were further subjugated and treated like second . . . third-class citizens.

That time was such a tumultuous time, and everybody was trying to survive . . . it was like chaos, so almost the whole family came together, and something interesting happened. You just drew my memory. I began to embrace . . . I don't know how this came about, but I began to embrace the *hejab* (veil). I began to have this sort of zealot in my own therapy. I found out that this zealous attitude toward, oh yeah, Islam and . . . let's become a devout Moslem. I think the *hejab* helped me protect myself from my sexuality . . . from being seen as a woman. I think it was another way of hiding my femininity. It made me feel safe.

I had had a sexual experience with an uncle of mine that was traumatic. He was only 4 years older than me, and one can say that we were only children because he was under 14, and I think I was 8 or 9 at the time, but that coupled with the whole notion . . . oh, I could wear *hejab* rosary, and they can't look at me. Nobody can look at me. Nobody. It felt comfortable. It was totally unconscious on my part, though, because, I mean, it was sort of a reaction to changes in my body. I was becoming more of a woman. I was about 13 at the time when this started to happen, and, of course, I was getting more attention out there in the streets . . . in the buses, taxis, and stuff.

So, I felt the *hejab* helped me with that transition. And then my family had such a hard time with that, because I came from a secular family, so they were really upset that when we had a male guest in the house, I wouldn't uncover my *hejab*. So, from 13 to about 18, I was wearing the *roosari* everywhere, until I left Iran in 1984 and went to Turkey. Even in Turkey, I was wearing it for 3 months. Finally, on the way to America, in the plane, my mom said, "This is it, you have to let go of the veil." I think I was afraid of the stigma at that point. For 5 years I was pretty much covered up. It felt very safe. I was not being seen the way I used to be seen. It felt really good. So I went through the phases of what you can call a sort of a liaison with an uncle who was only few years older than me . . . but I was very ashamed and guilty about it . . . to becoming a tomboy . . . to wearing the *hejab* all to just sort of . . . to cover up the shame and guilt of being seen as a sex object.

So, I think women's bodies are viewed very differently in a patriarchal system. Our bodies are there to reproduce; they are there to arouse men; they are there to be enjoyed by men; there is just not a lot of focus on a woman as a whole. It is like this

separation: you don't have much to say; you, basically, are almost like an appendage to a man, especially if you are married . . . or even as a daughter or a sister, you are always, like, someone's woman. You know what I mean? You are almost, like, a possession. So this whole notion of woman's identity is tied in with a man's. It is just very sad. I mean, I talk about feelings. I think, really, to this day, it makes me very sad that women in Iran and other patriarchal systems have so little to say about their lives, about their future, their children, and their marriages. I mean, it is quite sad.

Another topic that bothers me is the double standard with the dating in Iranian society. It is almost like boys are encouraged to experience sexuality right away, to the extreme where their older brothers or their uncles take them to brothels. They really push sex on them, to prove their virility. This is a way in which sex and love are separated in our society. Sex is the domain of the whores, and love can only happen during marriage and engagement. Persian society does not allow a healthy relationship between teenagers or young people to flourish. Dating is considered to be a taboo, unless the intention is marriage. Even to this day, girls are afraid to date out of fear of being judged and labeled as loose women. It is accepted for men to have sexual feelings and urges, and to act upon them. Women, on the other hand, are encouraged to hide their sexuality, and women are completely encouraged to be dormant and docile. Society promotes it. I know my family promoted it. I was not allowed to date, not only in high school but also in college. I was 20-something, going to college in America, and still I could not tell my mom—who is supposed to be the closest person to me—that I liked a boy in my class. I had a completely platonic relationship with this boy; we were never physical; we just studied

together and hung out. Even after I left Iran, the cultural system still operated in my household, until I moved out when I was 30 years old.

I guess that you could say you can take a girl out of Iran, but you can't take Iran out of a girl. In my case, I have felt that I have left the Iranian girl in me. Any act of spontaneity in terms of femininity or sexuality is always accompanied by guilt and shame. I always ask: what if someone finds out that I had intercourse? I also feel guilty about my body, my sensuality, and my femininity. There is a split existence, between becoming a bicultural person living in Iran through my formative years until the age of 18, and coming to United States with my family, which I think prolonged that experience of patriarchal oppression. My family transported the patriarchal system with them to the United States, and this oppression is embedded in me. The family continued the legacy of oppression in the United States. I remember my brother had a totally different sense of privilege in America. My brother, being 4 years younger than me, could date freely and was free to do whatever he wanted, because he was a boy. He also did not have to worry about his virginity or getting pregnant.

I don't know what to think. It is so crazy; it really sucks. There is a huge difference between the way a boy and girl are treated. I feel I have no right to think for myself, nor can I have my own mind and make my own decisions about who I date . . . or whatever the issue might be. Another huge discrimination by my parents was that they differentiated financially between my brother and me. This really bothered me. Of course I went to school, and they supported my undergraduate studies, but they supported my brother by giving him a huge capital to invest in business because he was a boy . . . in

the hope that, as a man, he would take care of the family, and, of course, that backfired on them. He had much more support.

So you see the kind of privileges that men have, and I know it sounds trivial when I look at it now, 20 years later. At the time, however, this kind of discrimination thwarted my growth and development. That is my biggest gripe about it . . . my biggest complaint. It is that the things that I needed to experience at that time . . . the things that were commensurate with my body development . . . the things that were commensurate with my psychological development . . . I was not allowed to experience or express, so I was muted, and I was deafened, and I was blinded. I was put under sort of a cover, under which I couldn't do these things . . . I wasn't allowed to do anything. I think this is part of what arrests development.

I was, of course, a rebel. I don't know how other people thought of it. To this day, I pretty much tried to do it within reason. I have this urge for individuation, it has been very strong since I was a girl, so I have always been caught between the tension of the opposites . . . between the collective obligations *vis a vis* my family and society, and my soul, my higher self. My higher self wants . . . strives to do, accomplish, create, and express. There has always been this dichotomy. It has really been difficult to hold that tension.

I don't want to be a complete outcast or act like a hippie, and I don't give a shit about certain values, but I also honor my own process of growth and development. These struggles are the hardest part of living in a patriarchal society; I am not much of a modest slave . . . an easily subdued woman, so it has been difficult to stand out and have my own say, have my own voice. That has really been challenging, but it has given me the

opportunity of growth. The harsh conditions of a patriarchal system have helped me to grow, and, you know, I had to really rely on my inner strength. My inner strength has pushed me through, I think, a lot of the time.

The whole notion of modernism and the notion of being a slave in modern times, it is very archetypal, and Persian women hardly realize this phenomenon. These women are almost like fish in water. The fish can't know the water, because the water is everywhere, so it is, like, how are you going to know anything about anything, until you are taken out of the water. Maybe then you have more sense of what it is like to be a slave in a modern society, and see the difference. I think in Iranian society at least . . . what I remember is . . . no one questions the status quo. It is kind of like how it is.

When I think of my mother, the image that I remember, the image that comes up for me is the image of a martyr. You know, she lived her life basically sacrificing for others . . . for her husband. It is not a conscious sacrifice. I think martyrdom . . . the shadow side of it is that it is not a conscious sacrifice. If it was a conscious sacrifice, then it's a past work of awakening, enlightening experience, because we need to sacrifice certain things in life. Everybody needs some ego; martyrdom glorifies sacrificing oneself at the expense of everything else, at the expense of one's voice at the expense of one's human desires and wishes. The sense of martyrdom amongst Persian women is . . . it's not like real martyrs, like saints or people who have died for you. It is more like a slow, painful death, day after day, for patriarchy . . . for the men in our lives. My mother has sacrificed her life for her husband. She married my father because she was 16 and she had to get out of the house. She married my dad for the sake of her father, and then she moved to the States for the sake of my brother. When she moved to the United States,

my brother was 14, and I was 17 or 18. We moved, because my mother felt that my brother was in danger of being taken to war and dying. In one way or another, she has always found a way to sacrifice herself for the other, and the other is usually a male figure. It is very ingrained in the psyche of the Persian woman—or the Middle Eastern woman—to be a martyr.

How do you experience your voice under patriarchy?

You know it is difficult to experience my voice in a patriarchal system. I choose to experience it through my writing . . . my work with other people . . . with women and children, and I also experience it with my relationship with men, nontraditional view of my relationship with men, those are the ways I choose to express myself and experience my voice. In a patriarchal system it is very difficult . . . I found . . . it is very difficult. When I was in Iran as a teenager . . . as an adolescent, I was afraid. There was a lot of fear.

One thing I remember clearly: there was just a lot of fear about what I can say, and what I cannot say. Experiencing my voice brings up a lot of fear. Even now, I remember . . . writing my dissertation, I was debating whether the topic was going to get me in trouble with the Persian government. The fear is deep seated; it is in my cellular memory, and it is in my unconscious. For me, having an authentic voice takes a lot of courage, because I need to be conscious about what I am putting on any paper, especially if it is going to be published. My name is going to be attached to my own dissertation, to a piece of writing, and I wonder who might read and see my work. I am speaking candidly here, because I know this is an anonymous forum. I think this is great, because I

don't need to worry about my name being associated with what I am sharing here. The fear is to that degree: it is the fear of one's safety. Does it have to do with being a woman that I feel these things, or any Iranian would feel these things? I think some of it has to do with being a woman. I think my views about marriage and relationships could be very threatening to an establishment, such as the Iranian government or any patriarchal system. I believe in equality in a marriage between man and woman, and you don't get that in a patriarchal system. Women are still men's property. Women and children are considered men's property in parts of Iran. In Iran's judicial system, women cannot ask for divorce. There is a law specific to women that I am afraid of, and I need to be careful about, in terms of my own writings.

In a patriarchal society, both men and women get punished for expressing their voice against injustice, but there is a double standard for women who speak up. There is another level of fear for women, that attacks their safety in prisons. Women get raped in prisons. It comes with the territory of being women that if you stick your neck out you could even have your body violated. Not only is your freedom taken away . . . your possessions taken away, but also your body is being violated. It is not the same with men, there are no records of men being raped in Iranian prisons, but there are records of women being raped in Iranian prisons. I am going to the extreme here to let you know that these fears I speak about are the fears, stories, and circumstances that I was exposed to as an adolescent. They are still a very much a part of who I am as a woman. So the exile we are talking about it is an ongoing process, and it is a conscious homecoming that happens. It is not that I am done and healed, cured and whole now, it is an ongoing theme. I just finished my dissertation, but having this conversation with you clues me

into other areas where I am still very much in an exile in my own body. It is not easy to experience one's voice in a patriarchal system. It takes courage; it is a solitary road that I have to move on.

How do you express yourself under patriarchy?

When I was living as an adolescent under the patriarchal system, I was a rebellious teenager, so I expressed myself with a lot of rage and sort of rebelliousness. Whether that was wise or prudent, as a teenager, I didn't think about those things at the time. I expressed myself, and I think even today if I hadn't left Iran, I still would have experienced myself with a certain level of independence. I would want my own independent thoughts, my own independent expressions. For me that would be very important, but, then again, I have to say: that was what got me into trouble in the patriarchal system in Iran. The patriarchs don't want to hear about feminism, or equality of women, or human rights.

In Iran I was not involved in women's rights, and expressing oneself was very difficult. Women were relegated to becoming wives, cooking meals for their husbands, and bearing children. I can't describe it to you. It is like this invisible frown you get as a woman, if you are intelligent, and you have something to say, and you want to express yourself. Except if you are talking to very elitist, intellectual people, you are going to get a frown and statements such as "what is this crazy talk? A woman's place is in the kitchen, barefoot and pregnant." So, that is what I mean. That is what I mean, and I am not exaggerating. I don't remember specific examples, but it was always an underlying tone in the family. I came from an upper-middle class family: my father was a doctor;

my grandfather was a jeweler. He was wealthy. Everybody was semi-educated in my family, and, even to this day, there is a sense of envy towards me by my family, and there is also a rage by men, because I am a PhD.

There is also a sense of devaluation of educated women. Except for my own father, my grandfather and one of my uncles, who are very proud of me for getting a PhD, I don't get this sense from others. There is not a lot of appreciation for women who speak their own minds. I think that my family is an extension of the patriarchal system, because they all grew up in Iran. All the values of the patriarchal system have been transplanted in us. Persians are kind of an immigrant bunch, who are very much struggling with patriarchal values. At least I am. It is a struggle to voice yourself. For me to authentically express my voice is a solitary road and a courageous path.

Are there other venues in which you are able to express yourself?

I also express myself through writing. Writing is a big part of it, because I am telling my story and the story of lots of other women who have been subjugated, and persecuted. I think, for me, that is the main place of expression. My lifestyle and my relationship choices are the second-most-important ways that I express myself. I had a divorce that was pretty stigmatized by my family. I was frowned upon. I left a man that my family basically foisted on me, after 9 months of marriage. My ex-husband was a suitor, and our families got along. In the beginning he liked me, and I liked him enough to marry him. We dated for 4 months and we married. Four months is not enough time to get to know someone. I was 25 years old, when we married, and we had some irreconcilable differences. He was a violent drunkard; I walked out of the marriage

because he was not willing to work on his issues. I decided: I will not become a martyr. I walked out; I did not lash out; I was less of rebel and more wise this time. I upset the apple cart. I was the first woman . . . the first grandchild in my family . . . in my lineage from both my parents' sides, who ever asked for divorce. It was a very big deal. My parents were trying to be supportive, but my grandmother had a hard time with it. She tried to tell me, "Uh, it is not a big deal. Your aunts have been taking beatings from their husbands for years." Sure enough, one of my aunts left her husband a year or two later. I wonder if some of my courage rubbed off on her. Maybe I paved the way. Who knows. At least, that is my fantasy. There are certain things that my grandmother has told me throughout the years that have been more patronizing than things that anyone in my family or of my own culture have told me. I like to highlight that women perpetuate the patriarchal system, even more so than men do. My grandmother insisted that I return back and live with my abusive husband and make the marriage work. My safety and well-being were secondary to my grandmother.

My grandmother never believed that a woman can amount to anything professionally. When I announced that I wanted to go to medical school, she made a comment saying, "We will see if she can ever become a doctor," or something to that effect. To me these were undermining comments and very belittling and devaluing of what one is trying to accomplish. I want to highlight here that sometimes what women do to each other in patriarchal systems is even worse than or similar to what men do to women. I don't think my experience was unique. It is the experience of many Persian women.

The expression of my unique self comes through my choice of the way I live my life. I have been single for the past 15 years, and that is very much frowned upon in my community. When I moved from my parents' house at the age of 31, everyone was aghast. People would say, "What do you mean? You are an unmarried woman. You are living on your own?" Bear in mind: I didn't come from a very traditional family. What I am sharing with you is from a perspective of a woman that grew up in a rather secular family. It has nothing to do with secular or religion. It is the system of the male's prerogative . . . in keeping women under wraps . . . under control.

It is not about religion, as you know. So, I come from a secular family within a religious culture. I am an unmarried woman, living on my own, getting my doctorate, expressing myself, telling my story in a public way in my dissertation so that it would hopefully be a book. So, these are the ways that I express myself. I am used to the kind of feedback I am getting for my boldness. I am kind of used to it by now. It is either envy, or shut down, or a frown, or belittling here and there. I only hear a positive comment or assuring gesture from my own mother and father. My relatives . . . the Persian community abroad is usually very dismissive. So far this has been my experience.

How does *abroo* affect you?

That is a good segue to *abroo*. When I was trying to leave my ex-husband, my family was worried about their *abroo*, because *abroo*, as you translate it in English, is image.

At the time of my divorce, self-image was such a big deal because of shame and the negativity of divorce. *Abroo* ties very closely to shame. So, it was like I brought shame to my family. I have to highlight something in this context . . . that, in a patriarchal system, such as Iran, divorce is considered a huge failure on the part of a woman, not only for a man but for a woman. I realized that very recently . . . how big of a stigma it is for women. If you are married for a few months, and you walk out for your safety, you are considered a divorced woman. Persians look at you very differently. First and foremost, you are no longer a virgin. Virginity is a big deal in those types of cultures, and you are not a virgin, and you have walked out on a man, so you are already considered unstable and noncompliant. It means you have a bigger chance to walk out on your next husband, so suitors don't want to come after you. You lose credibility and desirability.

Abroo, shame, and self-image are intertwined. Divorce is considered a failure for oneself and the family, and with failure comes shame and loss of *abroo*. With no *abroo* you are now a liability, because nobody wants you. So those two things in tandem speak to the experience of *abroo*, self-image. Your self-image is tied to the self-image of your family. If your self-image is ruined, so does the self-image of the family. It is a huge burden to carry this *abroo*. This is the example of how I experienced the *abroorizi*, losing image. I did major *abroorizi*. Major. Apparently, right after me, one aunt and two of my uncles divorced. So, three people have already divorced: two being male, one female. Again, for men divorce is not as big of a deal as it is for women. I think I was the first one who made the biggest *abroorizi*, because a wedding is a very public event, and I had five hundred people at my wedding.

After 6 months my parents had to announce to the guests: thanks for your gifts, but the bride walked out on the groom. The details of my abusive marriage began to leak out, and people learned that my ex was an alcoholic, and physically threatened to hit me. I did not give him a chance to beat me up, and I walked out. He wanted to reconcile, but I said I had conditions, and he wouldn't put up with it, so we ended up going our separate ways. He went and sued me, right after I walked out on him, for \$250,000. He sued me for fraud and emotional distress, and he claimed I was not a virgin. I had to hire an attorney. I had to defend my virginity, which I had proof of, because, by the grace of God, I had gone to the gynecologist a week before meeting him. Seeing a gynecologist was completely by chance. Lawyers subpoenaed the records from UCLA hospital, and all this process took 9 months and \$17,000 on my part, for my attorney.

We got a motion summary judgment, and the judge became so frustrated. He said to him, "How dare you bring this case in my court, when I have rapist and murderers?" He took the suit and put it in the garbage can. The judge didn't award me. I was screwed royally. The case was so asinine. Dealing with this man was a trauma. My lawyer knew his lawyer, and he said his lawyer is a big mafia guy; he represents all the mobsters. My ex couldn't find a legitimate lawyer to represent the case. He paid big money to this lawyer to take this case. They sued my mother, father, and my uncle, who signed my *agahd*, or marriage certificate. My poor uncle in Washington D.C., he had to go hire an attorney. To this day my uncle is one of my enemies because of what happened. He blames me. In a patriarchal system, the person who gets raped gets blamed. That is a little anecdote for you of what I have been through, dealing with men in my culture, especially with my ex-husband. It is a double whammy . . . a double hurt.

First he gets foisted on me from the family's side, and then he goes and sues me. I married him through a semi-arranged marriage by my family, and, when I told him I couldn't continue living with him, he sued me and claimed that I wasn't a virgin. I proved I was a virgin. This is how everything is tied to *abroo*. I completely forgot the link. My image and my family's were completely tarnished. Imagine a 26 year old woman, who just got married, walks out of the house 6 months later. Her husband goes to court, gets judgment against her, claiming to the whole community . . . 500 people, who were in my wedding, that she was not a virgin on her wedding night. Imagine how my grandfather, my father, and my uncles took this news. Imagine what they thought of me. I had to inform my mother and everybody that I had proof of my virginity. Luckily, I had gone to UCLA on my 25th birthday. I thought I needed a pap smear. The doctor came in the room. She wanted to do a Pap smear. She turned around and said, "Are you crazy? You are a virgin. I can't even put the speculum in your vagina. A pap smear is for people who have sex." She wrote in my file that I was a virgin. That was the proof.

You should know this: in Iran . . . in Moslem cultures, a woman who wants to marry has to see a doctor before her marriage. Brides have to have proof of their virginity. I think that in my own subconscious way, I had to prove my virginity to myself . . . to make sure that I remained intact, pure before my marriage. It is interesting how the psyche arranges all of this. This was a moment of victory and saving face for my family. My mom told everybody, "Wait a minute. *Abroorizi nasodeh* (we have not lost face)." She declared to the community that she had proof of my virginity. Throughout all this . . . I felt like an outcast. No one called to consult me. There was no support . . . except there was support from one of my uncles. He paid for the lawyers' fees and gave

me a loan. No one else supported me. It is hard growing up with five uncles that are very close to your age. It was like older brothers. It is not like they were going to say, “Oh, honey, it is okay, sweetie. It is all right, honey. This guy is an asshole.”

The only positive comment—I heard from my attorney—soothed my soul: he said you have not done anything wrong. You married the wrong man. He was a Persian lawyer, a man I have a lot of respect for, because that comment was the only realistic comment I heard for that 2 . . . 3 year ordeal. Nobody . . . no man in my family was ever able to console me. They didn’t even know how I was feeling. Women are the same. They are worse. Women in a patriarchal culture are very inept, very inert, very afraid They are not going to stick their necks out for anybody. Here is a story for you in regards to *abroo rizi*.

I can write an autobiography of how the patriarchal system dwells inside and outside of me in diaspora. That is important . . . key to remember, if you are interviewing people who live in America within the patriarchal system. Patriarchy, as a social system, is alive and well in our cultural system, and it needs to be emphasized. Maybe in the future . . . in our children’s time patriarchy may be abolished, but for me, as an immigrant, it is pretty hard.

To make a long story short, I won the lawsuit. The judge threw out the case. My mother-in-law had a huge ax to grind in this whole matter. She was devastated that I walked out on her son, who acted as if he was her husband. She had encouraged her son to sue me. I remember running into my ex-mother-in-law in the dentist’s office. It was about a few weeks after I had won the lawsuit. I had this great smile on my face. I looked her in the eyes, and I just looked away. I didn’t even say hello, or good-bye. I

just looked at her. I gave her this old, big smile, the smile of the girl who got away. It said: I survived you; you couldn't crush me. She walked away. It was meant . . . for me to run into her for the last time. She was the weaver of the whole plot. She was the one who wanted us to get married, she was the one who came to my *kastegari*, knowing full well that her husband—Freudian slip—her son was an alcoholic. She called me right when we broke up and said, “we know my son has a problem with alcohol. We want you to help him.” I said, “Your son needs professional help. I can't help him. He was a drunkard and a violent man. If I knew this, I would never marry him.”

She was the weaver of the plot. She set the whole thing up. I know, for a fact, she is the one that arranged for them to come and sue me. I tell you, a lot of women are worse than men in this system, in that they cannot see another women be free. My mother-in-law was beaten by her husband for years; her oldest son was also a wife-beater. Bear in my mind that my ex's parents were mayors of Mashhad. They were both doctors. They owned the biggest hospital in Mashhad.

My in-laws were both students of Sufism, both here and in Iran. But no one knew they were wealthy beyond belief. They lived in Bel Air; they are a pretty big name *karshoon miraft*, here and in Iran. Don't forget this is a prominent family in Iran, in that they are very educated. They were into *erfan*, Persian mysticism doing *namaz*. They are devout Moslems and considered very good people, but there is evil within them that lurks within the full walls of their being. People knew they were evil, but nobody told us. This is the story of *abroorizii*.

The psychology of Persian women is interesting. To this day my mother asks me, “Do you think you could make this marriage work?” To this day she holds me

responsible for the divorce. How much of a martyr-consciousness is she holding? It is a lot to be a strong woman in Iran, or in any male dominated society. It takes a lot to be a strong woman. You have to face a lot of loss. It is like you have to risk losing your own parents, your *abroo*, your status. I had a different status as a wife of this guy, there was a huge difference in my lifestyle, but I was not willing to sacrifice my soul and my authenticity for status.

I am just grateful to be out of that marriage. It was during that tumultuous marriage that I found a church. I started reading the bible, and I realized there is a God that unconditionally loves one and is not angry at one. The Christian God had both a masculine and a feminine, a loving side that was in juxtaposition to the kind of angry God of Islam, Allah, that I knew seemed to always favor men. I remember, in my teenage years, I would read the Koran, searching and searching for evidence of equality between men and women. Moslems claimed it was in there, but I couldn't find it. As a teenager I was curious, I found this verse that spoke about how men are keepers of women or something to that effect. I am not certain of this exactly, so don't quote me on it. I understood that as women, we can't keep ourselves; we need men to keep us. I remember I had such a hard time with that concept. The betrayal of my ex-husband and the helplessness of my own family paved the path for me to turn to Christ. I chose to follow the saying of Christ about loving oneself, loving one's neighbor, and loving God. The miracles that Christ performed, such as the way he touched people's lives, were inspiring to me. It gave me the courage to say, "I am worthy of being loved. There is a God that loves me the way I am. I don't have to change . . . to be constantly afraid." Christ saved me.

That was another *abroorizi*, when the community found out that I went to church. My ex called me a traitor. I used to lie to him on Sundays, and I used to tell him, “I am going to the gym.” In Islam, it is a huge thing when you convert. Moslems call you an infidel. And you immediately become enemy of God. That is another huge *abroorizi*. My ex-husband, in order to keep his image of a strong, macho man in the community, told everybody that I was not a virgin, and I was a Christian convert, and this was the reason he let me go. He made it sound like he divorced me.

There are other experiences . . . in Iran. My grandfather on my father’s side had two wives. I never remember his first wife, my blood grandmother, because she died of diabetes. His second wife took care of the kids and helped with the first wife. The second wife never bore children. They called her Narook, which means *hameleh nemisheh* (someone who can’t bear children). This was my first-hand experience of a man who had two wives. It is common in Iran to have two wives, and for the two wives to live in the same household and share the household tasks. God bless her soul, Narook was a good woman. It is common for Moslem men to have two wives.

How do you experience your sense of self?

Right now and for a long time I have experienced myself as a liberated, empowered woman, but it wasn’t always like that. I struggled to get here. As a teenager, I experienced myself as a very lonely person, very confused. I was also a seeker; I always had this very central sense about me that one might describe as strength of a soul. I always felt very centered in that, even when I was going through the darkest of darkest experiences in Iran, I felt that I had a communication to that center part. There is strength

there. You might call it divinity; you might call it God. These days I call it the Beloved. I was connected to the core . . . to the source of my spiritual heart. I was always connected to my heart. This feeling of connection to my core is the source of my strength, and it has evolved over the years. I wore a mask of a woman that married, because she wanted to please her parents, and the woman that survived. These are all my outside masks. Inside, I was strong the whole time. I held to my core, by the grace of God.

There was some courageous part of me that helped me in the worst scenarios in Iran . . . in the darkest times right after the revolution. I remember I prayed at night. I remember I woke up in the middle of the night, and I knew I was the only one awake for probably many hours. I have always had this connection to the other side . . . to the mysterious . . . to the invisible, and that has helped me survive. It gives me sustenance. That part of me will survive no matter what happens to me. The soul will survive anything. The soul is not affected by the temperature in the room. The metaphysical, spiritual aspect of who we are remains intact. I have always been interested in metaphysical teachings, since I was a teenager, because I wanted to know more about the experience, not as knowledge, not as a philosophy but as a gnosis—knowing from the place of heart.

I don't live in paradigm of a collective. I live by my moral standards. If you look at participation-mystique, the idea is people live in collective illusion. As a person evolves, they do their own thing. This disturbs the collective and the whole, the collective wants to pull us back, or we unconsciously want to go back via feelings of guilt

and shame. During my 20s I lived by gnosis . . . by what the heart wants, not by what the collective dictated to me.

Do you experience any psychological symptoms under patriarchy?

For years I had panic attacks, after I left Iran. It started in my early 20s. I remember I had severe panic attacks. My heart would beat fast. I would feel dizzy. I could not think. I felt comfortable only when I was in a fetal position. I remember having these symptoms, when I went on a first date. I had panic attacks when I was engaged. All the emotional attachments of being with a man triggered panic attacks in me. I think most of my panic attacks were related to relationship experiences with men. I would get flashbacks of my molestation experience, because it was very traumatic. I was 8 years old when I was molested, and I thought I had lost my virginity. At 8 years old, I did not know any better. I only heard things. I was very afraid that I was impure and not a virgin. I felt defective, and I started dating and getting married through *kastegari* system. I was very scared. I thought my secret would be revealed, and my anxiety attack increased. I discovered that my secret panic attacks were my major psychological symptoms. Another symptom that I endured for years was a severe back pain. It started later on in life, when I realized how much mourning I had to do in regards to my friend, who died in Iran in a political prison. My severe back pains were painful. The pain slowly dissipated, when I began therapy, and I started to deal with my emotions. I know it was psychosomatic pain. I know that, because, at the time, I was very young and active. There was no reason for me to have debilitating back pain. After my divorce,

I had a bit of depression. It was a kind of short-lived depression. I was sort of grieving the loss of the illusion of marriage and kids.

How do you experience your sexuality under patriarchy?

I want to move to the next topic: sexuality, where I had the most sense of liberation and empowerment. It is an area where I found I can experience a level of freedom in choosing the way I want to be sexually with someone, and who I want to be with, and also a level of responsibility, so it is not freedom at the expense of everything. But I am also aware of my level of responsibility, in terms of my choices. Sexuality is an area in which I am very Westernized and open. I find that the freedom I experience is very threatening to patriarchal men. They are not used to women who know what they want, what they like and do not like, and how they like to live. I am finding how I am perceived by men. Due to my own comfort level with my sexuality and sensuality as a whole, I realize that sometimes men find it threatening. Persian men are not used to it.

Men from the old world feel threatened by autonomous women. They are also judgmental about free women. They are threatened by free, independent women, and therefore they judge them. I have had a very satisfying love life, if you equate love with sexuality and sensuality and romantic life. I am perceived by men and patriarchal standards to not be in the norm. It is strange and shocking to men to see an independent women being educated in America, studying psychology, and being sexually free. The liberation puts me in a small category of special women. I am part of an elite group of women that scare men. In my case men have said that, as a psychologist, I have the supernatural powers of getting into their heads and figuring them out. Some men really

get excited and try to use me as their therapist. There are men in the middle, who don't know what to make out of a woman like me. I remain an enigma. Of course, I am talking about the patriarchal men in my family. I guess the way a woman is judged depends on the level of education and openness of the man judging her. I feel judged by them sometimes. I feel I am too intimidating to them, sometimes I feel I am just segregated, because I am so educated. My uncle once jokingly told me, "You are too educated now. How are we going to get you married off? You are almost too qualified. You are over-qualified. Who wants to marry a PhD?" It is common thinking amongst patriarchal men. They don't want to marry a woman who is a PhD. Education becomes a liability.

My perception of men constantly changes, as I get more and more liberated. As I become empowered, my experience of men changes almost all the time. I attract different kinds of men. I find I am not looking for a rescuer. I am not looking for someone to come and save me. I am not looking for someone that I can learn from as much as I was 10 years ago. I am not looking for a lover who can be a mentor anymore. I am looking for a lover who can be an equal, so that we can go out there and do our thing. I am attracted, and I am attracting different kinds of men who understand my accomplishments . . . men who are not threatened by it; they like it; they appreciate it, and they are stimulated by me . . . men that welcome my success. It has been a journey coming full circle: from the little girl who got married, caught up in a Cinderella syndrome at 25, till now two decades later. I don't recognize that little girl and the way I used to look at men. The main difference is that now I don't look to be rescued by a man, and I know in a patriarchal system women are looking for a man to emotionally and

financially or mentally rescue them, uplift them, take care of them. I don't see men as my saviors. My views about marriage are different now. I am not necessarily interested in conventional marriage. I am happy with a life partner. I am much more flexible.

I was reading Sartre and Simone De Beauvoir, when I was a teenager, 30 years ago, but the way I read them now is very different. I read them before like a little starry-eyed girl, who couldn't believe what she was reading. Now when I read about the relationship between the two authors, I say: well, this can happen to me. I can be that. I believe I can have an equal relationship with a man, because I have lived in the United States. My thinking has shifted. I don't think this transformation could have been possible in Iran. In Iran and under the current system, it would have been more challenging. It could have happened more slowly and more traumatically in order to get where I am. I have been lucky and blessed that I have lived in the United States since I was a teenager . . . since I was in my last year of high school. I am grateful for that. It has given me the chance to go through the two models: the patriarchal system and the free American system. Postmodern world . . . America definitely grants a lot more freedom and equality for women than a country like Iran. This is an important distinction to make . . . that, if you did this interview with me . . . if I lived in Iran still, and had never left, I don't think I would be answering you and sharing about my experiences this way. I think that a lot of my insight comes from the two different experiences I have had. I compare them, and I realize I have come a long way. I think that is an important distinction.

Laleh Interview

What is it like to be a woman under a patriarchal regime?

I chose this man as a husband, because he was very popular amongst the girls in my town, and I wanted to be ahead of all my friends. I wanted to be seen with the most popular man. It was only later on that I realized that external beauty, or physical beauty, amounts to nothing; it does not put food or salad on the table. When I turned 20, I realized I shared my bed with a man who has absolutely nothing in common with me. Our lives continued together. In the beginning of our marriage, I was unable to have a child. Everyone was worried and anxious that I had not conceived. My mother-in-law and her daughters, who liked me, were forcing me to see doctors all the time because they were anxious. You have to understand that, in Iran, a woman is valued by her capacity to give birth to as many children as possible, especially boys. Gender plays a crucial part in this dynamic. When we say children, we mean . . . mainly boys are desired. The fact that I had not conceived right away was seen as a huge defect on my side. The pressures were unbearable for me, and, because I was married so young, it was normal that I did not become pregnant immediately.

At the age of 20, I had two kids, and I had nothing in common with my husband. My husband was a gambler, and all he thought about was his gambling. On the first day of our marriage, my father gave me my substantial dowry, which was a three-story house. The rent from this house was considered an income for my husband, and, therefore, he never wanted to buy me even a pair of socks or *jorab*. During our marriage, when the rental income did not suffice, and we needed an important sum of money, my husband

would tell me, “Go. Get it from your father. Your father is rich. Go get it from your father.”

My husband was never there for me. He was always absent. All he thought about was gambling . . . and other women. During our conjugal life, he fell in love fervently five or six times. During these times he treated me like a *kohneh* (an old torn piece of cloth). My role was to be a full-time housewife, who cooks, cleans, and takes care of children. When I saw that I could not receive any money from him, and I did not want to ask for money from my dad, because girls in Iran are brought up not to expect financial support from their fathers after marriage, I started to work. From the beginning my husband . . . he *mizad tooy sar man*, meaning he would belittle me and say, “Do you see yourself working? Do you think you can work?” It happened that I became successful and earned five times more money than him. The last time that he fell in love, I did not want to stay with him. Each time he fell in love, he would come and say to me, “I fell in love. Do not touch me, and do not talk to me.” When my father passed away, my mom came to stay with me and my kids. When she saw that my husband came home really late or disappeared for days, when we were all sick and alone in the house, my mom, who was zealously against divorce, told me, “What is divorce for? It is for situations like yours.” I had thought about divorce, but I was afraid to take any action. In our family divorce did not exist. I was the first one in my huge family that was getting divorce. Many of the elderly or *bozorg famil* came to intervene and tried to bring us back together, but my husband fell in love again. At that point everyone gave up and stopped intervening in our internal affairs, and we finally divorced.

As a businesswoman, I was very successful until the Persian revolution. I invested all my income in Iran until Khomeni blew up everything. I started all over, to work outside of Iran. I raised my children alone and married my daughter in the best possible way. *Arossy greftam, namzady greftam*, (threw a wedding, an engagement party) all with my own expenses, without anybody's help. My children both studied in universities in the States, and I paid for their education. I did everything myself. No one *hazer be komak ma nabood*, "tried or wanted ever to help me," especially my husband. He only thought about his gambling. After our divorce, my husband married twice. The second and the third wives divorced him for the same reasons I divorced him. Each time he fell in love with a new women, he would stop supporting the former woman financially. So they left.

He was never there. He either ignored me, when he was physically present, or he was absent . . . never home. If I were to summarize his behavior, it was neglect, *bemahali*, "not paying attention, no respect." He would say, "You working? Ha!" He was cynical and always ridiculed my work ethic and my perseverance and my know-how as a businesswoman. From the beginning of our marriage, he would say, "If I had married a *kareji*, a Western woman, at least she would be able to do secretarial work, and she could bring in income." Ironically, when I began to work, my earnings were 10 times more than a secretary, and I spent it for the family. He didn't directly use my money, but because he used to lose money in casinos, and he gave *check bemahal* (check with no money in the bank). I had to bail him out of prison.

Growing up, I witnessed an immense love between my parents. This was not common amongst Persians. My parents were very close, and 'til the day my dad was

alive, my parents were holding hands. They were lovers, and I thought life is this. My parents referred to each other as “*shomah*.” It is a more formal way of addressing a person. It is a formal “you,” which does not exist in the English language. In French it is *vous* and not *tu*. In English it is only “you.” It was difficult to believe my destiny. My father was a very wealthy man, but my mother controlled all his wealth. It is hard to believe after having role models like my parents that your own husband does not care for his children; he only cared about two selfish needs: his gambling and his penis . . . *pain tanash*, meaning “his bottom half.”

When I was in Iran with him, he always left me at night. This was common in certain Persian families, and I had accepted it, but in my family this was never the case. In my family, my mom and her word were everything. My father had so much love for me that he always made me sit on his knees. I had a sister who had died, and I was a replacement of my sister.

How do you experience your voice under patriarchy?

Because I was a businesswoman, and I had power, people who needed me to be a voice for them treated me with a lot of respect. When the revolution came along, and my circle of influential friends was *nabood shod*, meaning “was destroyed,” I opened my eyes, and I saw that all those people who treated me with so much respect disappear.

My life began when I started to work. My self-respect and self-confidence grew. I began to trust myself. I could speak to and with people. People began to believe in me. Before that, I could never think that I could work and that I would be respected in society. Before starting to work, I was a nobody, a *bikody*, not good for nothing. I was a

cursed woman, who had married a horrid man. My voice was low. Whoever talked to me would say, “Why are you like this?” It was not like now . . . that I have a solid, resonant voice; it was a voice of a person who had no confidence. Before working, I was mute, because I had been so dismissed: too *sary kordeh bodam*. I was so humiliated. I thought I was a nothing shit. I was always crying. When you have a husband that constantly tells you he is in love with another woman, and you love him, obviously you will feel *pajmordeh* (wilting). You begin to detest yourself. Let me show you: when I divorced, what did I look like. Look at my picture. This is a year after my divorce. My husband wanted me to feel low. That is why he revealed all his affairs; he could keep silent. He wanted to kill my soul, to degrade me. After our divorce, he kept telling people that he never did love me. He said the same for the second wife.

He married his second wife when he was 50 years old. I assume when you are 50 and you get married for the second time, you love your wife. He married me when he was 30 years old. It is easy to say I did not love. I do not love. Isn't it? When he used to tell me he did not love me, I did not sleep all night long. I would cry. I would walk all night. In my house he would flirt with my own friends. He would have affairs with them. They would give me sleeping pills so that they could be together. My husband gave me sleeping pills; put me to sleep so that he can be with the other women. My husband was with a lot of women. How did he fall in love so much I wonder? Today as we speak, my ex-husband has left the women, but he cannot leave gambling. He has a girlfriend, and they live separately. When I started to work, I left everything in order to gain financial stability. Now that I am retired, I am still working. I help my daughter.

How do you express yourself under patriarchy?

I become the voice of other women; women with marital problems come to me for help. I find them lawyers; I translate for them. I do whatever I can for them. In Iran, I would help women to go to universities. I would help them financially. When I was married, I was totally out. I was only trying to make money . . . to provide for my children in the best possible way, because I came from a big family, but I always am thinking to help everyone. I helped a friend who was homeless. I expressed myself through my work. I want to be successful in one area of my life—and that is my work—to compensate for my failed marriage. Years ago, I was very popular at work. I was huge in my profession. I was an importer.

I came from a family . . . we were very fashionable. I expressed myself by wearing very fashionable clothes, but when I was with my husband, he didn't give me money. My husband constantly told me that I would amount to nothing.

But I expressed myself by becoming very influential in Iran, and I remember I never had to go through customs entering or leaving Iran; I was directly accompanied to the plane, like *Farah Diba* and all the *darbaris*. I never had to show my passport. I also had very influential friends in Iran. Inside of Iran I used to travel between Tehran, Abadan, Shiraz, and Esphahan. I was always given red carpet, *accueil* reception. In airports I never had to stand in line. I was treated like royalty. While I was living abroad with my husband, I was doing business with Iran.

My ex-husband had demeaned me so much . . . reduced me so much that I felt I was a nothing, a piece of shit. My influential friends had adopted me, and my way of

expression and being became like my refined friends. I became even more refined, more sophisticated and elegant. My best friends were the refined echelon of society, and I adopted their lifestyle. There was a time that I was living between Tehran and one of the European capitals with my ex-husband. I would receive all my refined and influential friends and arrange for their stay in Europe. They became my connections in Iran. Don't forget, at the time I was very beautiful, elegant, and naturally charming. These refined friends trusted me like their eyes. These friends trusted me with his eyes closed. They trusted me and believed in me, because I was honest and correct. They all died, poor things. When I got my divorce, I was so depressed that one of the ministers changed four planes and came to see me in order to console me. He used to be my father's friend. When my dad died, he told me, "You are my daughter. You can always count on me. Don't think you do not have a father." He died a few years ago in Vancouver.

How does *abroo* affect you? How do you experience your sense of self?

After my marriage, I had a lover for 5 years. Because of *abroo*, I did not marry him. I loved him. He loved me. *Asheg delmordeh o bodam*, meaning, "I was madly in love with him." It was a hidden relationship for 5 years. Nobody knew about this relationship. I hid this relationship, because I wanted my daughter to marry well in our community. Love is taboo in our culture, and if anyone knew of my relationship with this man, it would tarnish my daughter's reputation. It would stain her *abroo*, and she would be banished from our community. I kept this secret from my daughter. She only found out about his existence when he was dying. My daughter at the time was 17 years old. At my daughter's age I had already been married for a year. How dumb . . . how sad

to be married at 16. I was in my late 20s when I divorced my husband. After my divorce, I had a lot of suitors, but I did not remarry because of my daughter and my parents' reputation, and because nobody got a divorce in the family. I had to be careful not to *abroo famil nareh*, meaning, "not to tarnish the family's reputation." People would say *dokatar bozorg shodah*, meaning "my daughter will soon be of marriage age," and it was not proper for me to date. Today, as we speak, I have to think of my *naveh*, my grandchildren, and I need to protect their *abroo*. Therefore, I don't date. It is a shame to date in my age.

So, the cycle goes on. Under the mask of *abroo*, I suffered, and I did not say anything. It was also for the *abroo* of my parents. I didn't want my parents to look bad in the community, if I showed that I am unhappy or have a bad marriage. This would affect their self-image, *abroo*, in the community, and bring shame to them. They could not raise their heads in front of friends and relatives.

I deprived myself from everything. I did not live with this man. I wanted to go out with a man before him, and I was afraid. I wasn't afraid for my reputation, because I would never marry a Persian man, even if they cut me to pieces . . . decapitated me. I would never marry a Persian man, but, because of my daughter, I had fear. I had to keep *abroo*. I had to keep face, and I deprived myself.

Another way I kept face . . . I told and showed everyone that I had a perfect marriage and a perfect husband. I used to hide my husband's bad habits of gambling and womanizing from family and friends. I suffered, but I kept my *abroo*. I would tell people, "I am great." I wouldn't let anyone know. I realized it was wrong. If my daughter is in the same situation, I don't want her to suffer and hold on to her *abroo*.

You see I had a great childhood, and it was because of my childhood that I was able to rise and work. I was brought up in the best schools in Europe. Fifty years ago, I was vacationing in Cannes with my parents. I remember in Montreux . . . in the Palace Hotel, we were served by waiters wearing white gloves. Now, I am working to provide for my daughter and her children.

My husband, on the contrary, did not have a good childhood; he was abandoned by his parents. A great advice a therapist once gave me was to make sure my children would marry into good families, into a nurturing family. Where a person is raised is important. *Kanevadeh mohemeh*, meaning “family is crucial,” she always advised me.

Do you experience any psychological symptoms under patriarchy?

I always had anxiety not to do the wrong thing. Don't dismiss my family's *abroo*. I have a lot of depression, and I have to take pills. My ex-husband, father of my children, hardly ever comes to see his children, even at times when they have been really sick. My daughter lives with an abusive man; *tahmaol mikoneh* (she is tolerant). Tolerance is a big word for us, Persian women. They raise us to be tolerant of men. My daughter tolerates her alcoholic husband because she does not want to have the same destiny as me, her mother, a divorced, lonely woman. She does not have the capacity to work the way I did, she told me herself. I believe the reason is that she never had a real, caring father figure. So, she stays with her abusive husband.

Nothing is important for me. I don't exist; I am in the periphery. Only my children count for me. So, I never felt that I was alone until I introduced two friends, and, because their husbands became friends, they excluded me from their group. They

are Persians and think that a woman who is divorced equals nothing. They excluded me from the group because they don't respect a divorced woman. This backward attitude is only common amongst Persians, not Westerners, *karejis*. They don't realize that this might happen to them. I divorced in the mid-70s. It was the first time that I heard that my friends say our husbands are friends. I thought they don't deserve me. Now I have more confidence, but yes, I am really hurt. Really hurt. I cried a lot. My mom would say at the end you will become blind . . . I had lost my confidence. *Neghah mardom*, the gaze of others, was heavy on me. It felt like I was nothing . . . from divorce to revolution, I lived the high life. After, I fell into misery because of financial crises and kids. I had a huge salary from my business. The income was cut after the revolution. I had properties, and one building alone was giving me an income of \$100,000 Swiss francs a month.

How do you experience your sexuality under patriarchy?

Nothing, nothing. My husband used to fall in love all the time. When he was out of love, he would approach me, but I did not have the same feelings. I was cold.

A bad thing about divorce was that my friends' husbands and my husbands' friends all wanted to have affairs with me. I never accepted, and 10 years after the divorce, I told my husband that they were not your friends.

For a few years before the divorce, I had no sex, and I was in my 20s, when I divorced. I felt a lack of intimacy and sex in my life, but because I was a Persian woman, and sex was taboo in my culture, I deprived myself from all kinds of physical and emotional pleasure. It is our education. I suppressed my sexuality . . . avoided men to not be labeled a whore. I did not want to be seen as a whore. I heard once that a friend

said, “Laleh has no husband,” and the comment was that Laleh uses the free market for men. This comment was made by my friend’s husband. It made me very sad. I was very careful what I wear; I did not wear *lokety*, revealing clothes. I did not want people to say, “She does not have a husband, so she is a whore.” In the Persian society, I tried to control my behavior, I tried to be very serious, but people do talk and gossip about a woman who is divorced, *harf dar mivarn*, they gossip. I did not care at a point. As a divorcee, I was alone in exile.

I consider myself a man, because I was in business, and I got along better with men, and without sex we understand each other better. My language changed with men, when I worked with them. I was more comfortable with men, because Persian married women look at us in a different way. We are strange species for them; they wonder what I do . . . who am I with. Persians think, if you date a person, you are a whore. Before, I was afraid to laugh loud or laugh too much . . . I was afraid I would be labeled *los*, “spoiled.” It did not matter what I did; *yek chiszi behem mebastan*, they would gossip about me. I would somehow be labeled.

I helped everyone. Nobody helped me. I had a lot of friends when I started to work, and I had a lot of friends’ diplomat friends. Men looked at me as a loose woman, because I was divorced. Some looked at to me with *tarahom*, “pity.” Some looked at me as a free woman . . . loose woman . . . someone they can fuck. Persian men are very judgmental. They would say and think as such: she is *badbaket*, she is a miserable, and she is destroyed. One thing that really *geroon tamaam shod*, “cost me,” was not having a father. My husband became an asshole when my father died. My father was my backbone. He was scared of my dad. After divorce, not having a father was difficult for

me. He was a mountain behind me, not only financially but emotionally. He gave me a lot of love. My father was a mountain behind me: not money, the love that he had for me. The reason that I am so strong is because of my dad. My daughter, who did not have a father present in her life, she is not strong in her life. My father helped everyone. He was the therapist, mediator, lawyer, and judge for everyone. He would go between wife and husband, when they had a fight. He helped mediate fights between my brothers. He had a special room in the house, where he received people and helped them. He was the cornerstone in lives of many. He used to say, instead of wasting money for *hallal* (meat that has been slaughtered in accordance with Sharia law) and spending time on conventional repetitive religious rituals, such as *namaz* (prayers which belong to 3,000 years ago) let's spend our time in helping people.

How do you perceive men under patriarchy?

I have friends. When I look at my friend, I see Ray who has a wife who controls him and gives all the orders, and he is considered as shit. The wife is vicious, and when the wife makes him swear not to talk to me, he does not talk to me. Now, he talks to me.

Persian men look down at women. I can never be with a Persian man. The love I had for 5 years was for a European man. I was his Goddess. He was European. He would say, "Why do you walk on earth? Come walk on my eyes." He would tell me, "Why put your precious feet on cement? Put it on my *pelk* (eyelids)." I used to hide his picture. I used to hide his existence, but now at my age—I am in my 70s—I don't care. Let people talk. Let them gossip. Let them think I am whatever. I like to put his picture on my counter in my living room, where I have the pictures of my children and

grandchildren. If I had not met this man, I would think I am the biggest shit, the worst person on earth. He took me, and my self-esteem rose to the sky, *arsh bala*, to the highest level in the universe. He would say, “A woman like you does not exist. You are the only rose of all gardens, ‘or *goltar nist*.’”

Even though I was extremely successful in my work, I looked at myself like a piece of shit . . . no self-esteem. There was a lot of similarity between my lover and my Dad. His overall love for me, his trust in me, whatever I said was the best.

I was perceived as a piece of shit by my ex-husband. If I had not started to work, I would have probably committed suicide, because my whole being was bad for my husband. With my lover . . . when I used to set the table with different colorful dishes, he had to take a picture of everything I did. He revered me, but my ex would downplay my accomplishments and talents. For the same table decoration I used to do, he would say, “If you know anything, go bring me money.” What is this? I still hear his voice in my head. He continuously told me that I was shit, and now I feel like a shit.

Rose Interview

What is it like to be a woman under a patriarchal regime?

It is difficult to be yourself. People have high expectations from you. You are constantly being told right from wrong. It makes me feel crazy. It is harder to be myself. I am constantly told right from wrong from the smallest to the biggest things in life; I am constantly molded from everybody’s expectations. There is so much pressure to be a certain way. For example, from which school I should go? In which city should I live? Closer to my family? What job do I want to have? When I was in New York, I wanted

to work in a restaurant. My family freaked out on me. I did it anyways, and it was the greatest experience of my life, and I grew from this experience.

Our parents, they don't let us to grow naturally. Almost everything that helps me grow . . . they keep me from doing it. I am not allowed to make my own mistakes. I am not allowed to dress a certain way . . . to express myself naturally. It is expected of me to be married at a certain age, with a certain type of guy, and, when it does not happen, I get blamed for it. Everyone finds reasons to blame me for not being married; they say I am so picky, others say I am looking for the wrong thing. While others say I don't do things in a conventional way. I should pick someone . . . anyone, just to make it work. If I did just choose anybody, everybody would attack me and say why don't I pick the type of guy that everyone else wants me to pick. Some say, "Why do you choose street guys?" Some say, "Why do you choose rich guys?" No one knows me. Everyone blames me for being single . . . for wearing mini-skirts . . . to the point that my mother gets beside me and covers my knees and makes me feel as if she is humiliated, because my hem line is shorter than what society allows. Sometimes, I feel so self-conscious. Overall, living under the system makes me so self-conscious. I feel like everything around me is made to be controlled, and I am blamed if I am controlling. It makes you a very uptight person . . . more than what is natural for me. I want to be free. It is too much fucking pressure. I feel guilty when I dress a certain way, even though it is natural to me. I feel guilty being myself. It is especially difficult because, between my Persian environment and the American environment, there is a lot of discrepancy. I get mixed messages. It is confusing, and I don't really know who I really am sometimes. I think that is why I have

not attracted the right man to myself. I am not married because society tells me who to be with, and my culture tells me who to be, so that keeps me from being me.

How do you experience your voice under patriarchy?

There is an expression in Persian which says, “Don’t speak unless you are spoken to.” In a nutshell, this expression summarizes how a woman’s voice is muted in my culture. For me, I am so expressive naturally that this way of being is very confining. I feel I have to constantly hide my feelings and expressions because they are not acceptable in my culture. Therefore, my enthusiasm is muted and I am not allowed to be as inhibited as I would like to be. I would get a lot of *ghashang nist eintory harf bezan, nabayad in ra begi*, meaning “it is not nice the way you speak, you should not say this or that.” I have constantly been reminded of what is politically acceptable to say, or not to say, in social situations.

For example, laughing loud in public with my gums showing is not acceptable in my culture, and I am told to be *kanumtar bash*, meaning “be more of a lady” and not a slut. My mother would shun me for speaking about my personal life to cab drivers in New York City, who were complete strangers and did not know me. Numerous times, if my mom and I were standing in a queue, and I spoke in English about a topic that was embarrassing to her, or she felt the topic was politically or culturally inappropriate, she would give me a nasty look. She would embarrass me in Farsi. She would say, “*harf nazan*,” meaning “don’t talk.” She wants me to be quiet in front of others over little things that occupy my mind and are so natural to talk about. I believe her attitude has to do with her upbringing.

My friends' parents would also put me down for not speaking fluent Farsi. They would say in a sarcastic tone, "You don't speak Farsi." They would belittle me, and put me down, and I felt judged by them. Farsi was not an issue for my parents. It is a bit frustrating for me to censure myself, and I have learned to be more diplomatic. It is healthy to a certain degree to be tactful. It is wise, because it preserves me. I don't reveal so much of myself. I don't see it as a totally negative thing. It is restrictive, but it isn't completely negative. There is a positive side. You learn to speak in a more pleasing way with others, so as not to hurt their feelings, and also to make them feel comfortable and not judged. You learn to speak with people with respect and in our culture; respect is of utmost importance. It isn't completely a bad thing. I think we need certain rules of behavior and ethics to help keep boundaries in our relationships, but I think our culture takes it too far, and makes us shameful of our voice . . . feelings, and so our voice becomes somehow muted. In my culture, you must learn to think before you speak. For example, I was hesitant to participate in your research project. I feel I need to censure myself.

How do you express yourself under patriarchy?

The way I dress, carry myself . . . naturally, the way I walk and talk . . . sometimes, I talk in a softer way. It has become that way because of my upbringing, and because it is feminine. My personality is very direct but not aggressive, and I speak directly. I have learned to tone it down. I express myself in writing, sometimes through dancing. In private I express myself. I let it out when I need to. I cry. I talk with my girlfriends a lot: friendship therapy. I listen to music out loud, and I love it. I play piano

when I am by myself. I will play for myself and express myself through music in a way that I don't do in front of people, because I am shy. I have learned to become mute because I constantly am watching myself and judging myself. Is what I do *khanoum* or not *khanoum*? Is it ladylike or not ladylike? Modesty is a virtue in my culture and, for example, when I play the piano it does not appear as if I am showing off. I think about what others think of me. In my culture, respect is of utmost importance and so is reputation, and there is a lot of emphasis on what others think of us and how we appear to others.

To give you an example of how the Persian culture has affected my voice, I remember a specific incident in college. I had just met the students in my building and we went out to dinner, and after dinner the topic of conversation was "tell us something about yourself." It was a revealing topic, a personal question, and we went around the table answering this question. I remember I was so nervous about my turn, and I couldn't understand how my new friends were at ease to give details of intimate moments of their lives to strangers. I was the only person of ethnicity, and it was unnatural for me to give details about myself to these people I had just met. They looked at me as a snob and an outcast. A short time after, when I became close to one of the guys, I mean one evening I was in his apartment, and he told me "I know there is a wild passionate side to you, but I don't get you. You almost always stop yourself in expression and action." He said he'd like to see me let go. Because I was silent I appeared to be intimidated or secretive, as if I had something to hide, or they assumed I was not nice, and that was very hurtful to me. My silence changed the perception and the relationship of my classmates towards me, to the point that they did not give themselves a chance to know me.

People tell me I appear so confident, and I feel very confident, but I also feel very shy at times, and I hide my shyness. We have to be *kanoum*, meaning “ladylike.” We have to be strong, not overly emotional. We have to be doctors and pharmacists and keep house and take care of our husbands, and now I am taught to *naz pesarhah ra bekesh*, meaning “cater and feed the ego of men.”

Although I am confident, I am very shy as well, and I think about what people think of me. My dad is not a typical Persian man, and he gives me confidence; my mom takes the confidence away, and I have to think before I do or say something. I don't attempt to seize the moment to tell a joke or signal to a guy, to show my interest or look into his eyes because I am afraid to be judged, to fail or to be criticized. Two funny incidents of my silence that I can relate are . . . once I was in a movie theater with a guy, and he put his arm on me to flirt, and I remember liking him and being interested, but I sat like a frozen statue. I stared at the screen and did not move. The second incident is the best. When I was living in New York, I went to a guy's home for Thanksgiving dinner. I was very sick and congested. After dinner we took a stroll in the snow, and he tried to kiss me, and I pulled away so as not to appear congested or stuffed up. I was so embarrassed that I did not explain myself to him.

How does *abroo* affect you?

Abroo makes me angry. We constantly have to live for other people, and that oftentimes keeps us from enjoying life in the moment. In the Persian culture, it is all about the past and the future. We don't seize the moment. If a girl wears lipstick today, it is a big deal. What does she want to be tomorrow? There is no *carpe diem*, seize the

moment . . . live in the moment. We are unable to enjoy life to the fullest. *Abroo* keeps us from tasting life. You are preoccupied about what others think. What makes me angry is why my family has to always live for others. It keeps us from experiencing and tasting life. It keeps us from prospering and advancing ourselves further. It is always this image to uphold, and I see it in my own family, and it is destructive to our lives.

For example, I see people borrowing money to throw extravagant events they cannot afford, and they have to work much harder to pay off the wedding. Whether you try to please them or you don't, people will still not be pleased all the time. That is what frustrates me. People put so much pressure on themselves to uphold the image. We drive luxury cars. We live in \$6 million homes, but on daily basis my mother is so preoccupied with our financial situation, and my father puts pressure on himself to work like a 25-year-old just to uphold the image. I can't be myself. I always have to be perfect. Persians are so unforgiving to imperfections. I am told to hide my true self.

How do you experience your sense of self?

It has taken me a long time to develop a sense of self. It was difficult to have that. My confidence came in my late 20s. I always felt like I was living for other people. I became incredibly reserved, although my nature is free-spirited. It made it difficult for me to gain self-confidence, and it put a lid on my self-esteem. I felt a lot of shame and criticism. But living in the States, it is the polar opposite. I have regained my confidence. I have taken a lot of shit, and it changed my perception. I see things black and white. Living under a patriarchal system has made me shy and reserved. I doubt myself. I always feel like I have to be my best physically. I am a perfectionist, an

overachiever. I always look good, the most educated. Everything is a pressure. I can't totally be myself. I feel different from other people, I am very quiet in gatherings . . . in groups. I am more talkative in interpersonal relations. It feels more comfortable. I don't feel judged. Judgment is a big deal in my life. I hate to be judged. I feel my own society is an overabundance of judgment from everyone and everywhere. I can't show my feelings. I have feelings I can't show. In terms of being perfect, it is perfection in all areas of life.

Do you experience any psychological symptoms under patriarchy?

I have a lot of anxiety and fear of never getting married, especially now that I am getting older. I have so much fear of not having children. It is totally under this patriarchal system. I feel insecurity, shame. I self-criticize. I feel pressured, and at times I feel overwhelmed and stuck. I have had enough of being judged for every little thing, and having to keep up an image.

How do you experience your sexuality under patriarchy?

As a woman, the system is totally inhibiting. They instill fear in you but, beyond fear, they instill terror about sex in you, yet they expect you to marry young and have children. There are so many expectations. You always have to look good, smell good, be *kanoum* in society, and please your man. Be a porn star for him in bed. This is pressure. It is all about pleasing the man, and the list goes on and on. You have to be everything and anything. In short, they make sex shameful, but they expect you to marry young and have children. Naturally, I am a very sexual and expressive person, but I have been

incredibly shut down. So shut down that I have trained myself to shut down. It hurts me. It is hurtful to be aware of the torturous life I lead. It makes me sad.

How are you perceived by men under patriarchy?

It is hard for me to understand that. I know I am perceived as sexy by some, and classy by others. I think no one realizes that I am as good a girl as I really am. They think I am more promiscuous than I am. Part of me thinks that they think I am a combination of a classy and a too good girl. Part of me thinks that I am the opposite, not fitting in, not sexually open. In general I am perceived as an attractive, sexy woman. They perceive me as high maintenance. I see myself as a simple . . . sophisticated, but simple girl. I don't have the stereotypical expectations as an Iranian Jewish woman that men have about me. I think I am stereotyped. I think, when men know who I am, their assumptions about me change quickly. The way they see me before and after is very different. Once they know me, they realize that I am intelligent, down to earth, and a "good girl." They definitely see me as a very confident, extroverted woman, which I don't see myself as.

How do you perceive men under patriarchy?

I am careful not to judge them, but the men in our community are very ambitious. They are overly confident at times, although some are ambitious and at times lazy. A lot of men are narcissistic or have narcissistic tendencies. I think they have very high expectations of women: beauty and sexuality are so important for them. They are lost and confused. They demand perfection. Even when they have in front of them what is

perfect, it is still not good enough for them. I feel sorry for them. One guy once told me it is a curse to be an eligible bachelor, because he has too many options, and he does not know what he wants. I think the men of our culture are very intelligent, but not very wise in their decision-making. They live very much in the moment, maybe too much so, and I don't think they realize how their decisions will negatively affect their future. They are on a power trip.

The new generations of men are very loving when you are with them. They are very affectionate, and they are very into having a good time. The younger and older are very different in positive and negative ways. The younger generations are almost obnoxious at times. The older generation of men has a more serious work ethic.

Amongst the young men, it is hard to find one who has the school values and work ethic of the older generation. Back in the day, virginity, seriousness, and morals were valued. Beauty was underestimated. A quiet woman was valued; a family-oriented woman was valued. Now it is all about tits and ass. It is all Pamela Anderson. Persian guys don't want a good girl. They will never go for a girl who is a virgin. They want a confident woman. They want a woman open to sexuality who is experienced. For them, they live in the moment; you take vacations with them and hop in bed after the first date. I don't know if what they want is necessarily what they will be serious about, if they will marry and settle down.

A lot of them get used to crazy party girls, get attracted to them, and settle down with them. That is one of my biggest problems. They don't know what they want. It is confusing for them, and for us. They are competitive, flamboyant, and showy. They are looking for something far greater than what they deserve and earn. They all want the

same thing. When I go to a party, depending who looks best that night . . . every guy in that party, every guy goes after the same girl and in the next party they do the same. Whatever looks best, they are so looks-oriented. No matter what personality the girl has, they still go after the best-looking girl in the crowd. I think at a young age their mothers cherish them and spoil them, because they don't have healthy relationships with their husbands and look for it in their sons. They have unhealthy relationships without boundaries; and one woman, at her son's *bar mitzvah*, told her son in front of the guests, "Go have fun with girls now, you are a man." In other words, she was giving him a license to fuck women as much as he wants, under the pretense that he is a man. Obviously, this is the opposite of what they teach girls. A girl at 30 must be a virgin, by her parents' and society's standards. This relationship between mother and son crosses too many boundaries and causes a lot of problems between mother, son and the son's wife, the daughter-in-law. The sons can do no wrong. They are always praised by their moms. Fathers are buddies with their sons. They are not disciplinary. They want to hang out with their sons, and they also encourage them to have sex and spill their seed. Religious people are different.

I am really working on myself to be natural and to be myself, despite all the pressures and expectations placed on me all these years. I realize I can't change society or my culture. So, finally, at 33, I decided to take responsibility for my life and break down all the barriers that have been built for so many years. It isn't easy, but I am determined to do it, because I realize that I will be living my truth. It is important that I don't just want to be myself, but I have to be myself to be happy. Having said everything, I am happy I grew up in the Persian culture, as crazy as it sounds, because of

its richness and its ambitiousness. It is a family-oriented culture, and there is so much beauty to being a Persian Jew. I also admire my parents, who came from Iran and made a life for themselves. I am not opposed to marrying a Persian-Jewish man. Persian-Jewish men, at the end of the day, want a Persian-Jewish girl. However, I will do things differently when I raise my children. I hope I will be strong enough to allow them to be themselves and grow in a healthy way, and resist making them into a certain mold . . . into what I want them to be. I love our people. I just think being caught between American and Persian culture has confused my generation, and a lot of pathology comes out of it. The pathology is largely due to being the product of two cultures' demands and expectations.

Yet there is a constant pressure to always being perfect, talking perfect, walking perfect, acting perfect, dressing perfect . . . to wear hair and make-up perfect. I am getting angry. I am told not to reveal myself too much in public, and to act the right way on dates. There is so much pressure to be quiet, say less, and make men feel comfortable. Hey, you have to *gooz*, “fart,” perfectly too.

White Water Lily Interview

What is it like to be a woman under a patriarchal regime?

Here, instead of women greeting by saying, “I hope you are successful,” they say, “I hope you get married.” Literally, not one woman has told me, “I want to see you as a CEO of a company.” After a while, the whole husband thing gets into your head, even if you are a driven person and your goals are career-oriented. The environment really shapes you. It is just about money. When you have your own money, you can say

whatever you want. But women around you don't have money, so it is self-inflicted; you were growing up in times when you couldn't work.

You could look at a revolutionary woman like my great grandmother, but the patriarchal values were really instilled in her, things such as leaving all her wealth for her sons. But if you think how all these women would leave tomorrow, how they could have half of the husband's earnings in the States. So what I am trying to say, it is not a two-way street. One person could say she can leave, could divorce and not get victimized; or at least not get caught in the circle of victimization. But when you look at someone's history, when you look at women's psychology and their role models, when you look internally and externally, you see the remnants of this system within them. You see small particles inside them, the remains in their system, affecting their levels of confidence and mental ability to make a decision. Whereas, if they are not living in that system, they can make a decision to divorce, every single one of these women can do it. But they have not been able to rid themselves of these remnants. It is blood, in their veins; it is a part of them, and it is fear-based. It is based on power; patriarchy takes away power and makes people victims; they have learned the role of victim, but they don't know how to take a role of power, and they have seen no woman do the same. The women are part of the system themselves; if there was a break in patriarchal system, and they saw women as role models, then there would be some sort of following. Women would not necessarily follow, but men would see it, and their attitude might change.

Women cannot feel entitled to this power when no one validates them. You can have that power, even in my generation. If you look at my generation and what they are talking about, they don't validate a woman having power; it is a repeating circle. How

many Persian women aren't going to law school, or medical school, because working in such fields does not fit the mold of the patriarchal system? I am not including the ones that open their own offices. It is so rare to find a woman entrepreneur, because they are removing themselves from the system. To do this, you are putting yourself in a territory that it is uncertain. If you go into law, you can move up, it is hierarchical. No one is taking risks. You hardly ever meet any female Persian entrepreneurs; they follow each other just as the last generation followed each other. With an entrepreneur, there is no system, the power is all in your hands. That is a hard burden.

The system of hierarchy is familiar to Persians, and it is male-dominated. I don't meet a lot of Persian nurses. There are a lot of lawyers. How many Persian lawyers do you see at top of their field? If they are following their passion, wouldn't they rise to the top? If you follow your passion, you don't stay average.

I personally have not lived with patriarchy. I lived with my mom until the age of 18, and my dad believed in women's capabilities. He was encouraging, except for acting, but a lot of parents don't like the acting profession; it doesn't have to do with patriarchy. My mom was independent, a feminist. So the only place I saw patriarchy was among my grandparents, and hearing my cousins say no one listens to them at the table because they were young and not yet married. I saw it when watching my cousins, so desperate to find a man that it consumed their whole lives.

Obviously I watched my grandma, and how my grandpa had certain expectations. But I don't know if those expectations were self-imposed by my grandma, because the only way I experienced it first-hand was by having to do what my grandpa expected of me, in order to get his connections, favors, and admiration. To be honest, I really don't

need him to admire me, it is not something I am looking for anymore. I am looking for what makes me admire myself on a daily basis. At the end of the day, no one really cares about you as much as you do about yourself.

How do you experience your voice under patriarchy?

I think because I saw that the men in my family were more stable than the women, in some respects I wanted to win their affection or something. So I would just be a pleaser, or chase after some idealistic type of love, some type of unconditional love from them. And my dad was busy, and not emotionally available. He was emotionally flat, almost like a vegetable. He didn't know how to show his emotions, and I had to bring it out of him, so it created a pleaser voice, not my real voice. The real voice became the baby voice, because a baby can say whatever she wants and it is still cute. No one gets mad at the baby.

Plus, when you get rid of your real voice as a child, you get rid of your childhood. A baby is loved unconditionally, because no matter what, you can't get mad at a baby. When I was growing up, I tried to make both of my parents happy; my role was to make them happy. I developed a false self, to show them contentment, and the voice went inside, and that created anxiety.

How do you express yourself under patriarchy?

I really don't. If you were expressing yourself under patriarchy, there would be no patriarchy. That is basic logic. It can come out in your career, or your sexual life. It

forms into a certain kind of aggression. Personally, I want to be successful, to make it big on the same level as men. I see myself as equal only when I reach that level.

How does *abroo* affect you?

I have an Asian boyfriend, and I can't sit comfortably in a restaurant with him, because I am afraid someone will see us. My reputation would be tarnished, I would be considered a whore. It is out of the ordinary, and people would use it against me. In this culture, the less people know about you, the better. Everyone hides their boyfriends. All Persian girls hide their boyfriends, it is so gay.

Everything revolves around *abroo*, the way you speak, the way you act, the way you dress; the presentation of yourself. Personally, when a person asks me how I am, I say fine. Why can't I say shitty, when I feel shitty? It is annoying, it creates a false self, and confusion about yourself. You begin to take on a certain persona, and part of your brain might start believing it, because it is repetitive. Anything that is repetitive goes into the subconscious.

Abroo comes from your parents. Sartre says that without society's eyes upon you, you won't become conscious of yourself. It is through the gaze of the other that you learn about yourself. You can spit on the street and not think anything about it, but if someone looks at you oddly, then you develop shame. The way you see yourself is through the other. Everybody has a little bit of *abroo*, it creates the social norms, but the Persians are obsessive about *abroo*. Instead of you dictating *abroo*, *abroo* dictates to you.

How do you experience your sense of self?

I guess I am not in touch with it yet. If you have been experiencing a false self, quite detached from one's true self; that part is numb. It takes a couple years to come back, I guess. Through different experiences you start to develop what you like or you don't like, or learn about yourself. Through work and friends, you will learn about yourself. Through therapy, you can discover certain things. It gives you a sense of why, but not what you want. If you have lived a certain way for years, it will probably take another 5 years to not be that way anymore.

Do you experience any psychological symptoms under patriarchy?

Paranoia. I have also become a bit manipulative and depressed. I used to sleep, I could not stop, when I was studying for the LSAT, because my parents wanted me to go to law school. My system used to shut down. I would go to UCLA to swim, and I would just sleep on the grass.

Anxiety is fear-based. When you lose your voice, it creates anxiety. It is like two people inside of you, two opposites. When you are a pleaser and you neglect yourself, the issue gets bigger and bigger. OCD, I always forget if I locked the door. I also have a phobia of STDs.

How do you experience your sexuality under patriarchy?

I am aggressive sexually. I am an extremely sexual person. For some reason, I want to keep my V-card. Virginity. It adds a value; I see it as a value, because of how I have been raised. My mom would say, "Make sure you don't kiss a guy." I guess I am

rebellious. I like to tease guys, it is a power complex. I had penis envy as a kid. I tried to piss like a guy. I thought it was cool, they didn't have to sit. Sitting down is an effort. I felt a sense of accomplishment when I pissed like a guy.

How are you perceived by men under patriarchy?

Really innocent and naïve, childish, not enough life experiences.

How do you perceive men under patriarchy?

Demented, and dumb, because they just are. They are just, like, selfish. They are jellyfish. Spineless. I think they are up their mommies' pussies. My grandpa puts his parents' pictures in the most appropriate place in the house. It is embarrassing, in front of my friends. I don't think men are that smart. In general, I am not impressed by men. They are not smart at all. Everything in their world revolves around their dick. That is it. Ciao.

Etessami Interview

What is like to be a woman under a patriarchal regime?

Men knew what they were getting into. I felt prohibited in Iran, at home, and in my grandparents' home. I was the only grandchild in the family for 10 years; I had the run of the place. I made my own decisions, and my grandpa was extremely supportive and had my back.

In Iran, you need to have a man's permission to do anything. I lived there until the 3rd grade, but I did not have to wear the *hejab*. I was under a certain age and nobody

messed with me. I was born during the Iran-Iraq war, and when I was born we went to funerals a lot. I grew up attending funerals, but it wasn't a sad thing for me. I was a kid and I thought that everybody grew up attending funerals.

Because I had such a supportive family, they didn't raise me to follow gender roles. They raised me to be myself, and they kept me away from the culture at the time. They raised me to be like my mom and my aunts: they are very free women. My family got together and put my name in for a drawing competition, for which I won first place. I was taking karate at the same time, and my family taught me to kick ass, helping me with my self-esteem.

I grew up in a family where I had to do something all the time; you couldn't sit around and do nothing. Everyone around me was constantly making art, and I was always doing things.

I learned how to survive from the males in my family, they saw I had more in common with them than with the women.

Patriarchy came from women like my Koran teacher, who would beat me up; my other female teachers also enforced the sick fantasy of patriarchy through the books with Khomeini's face. It really was the women that were spreading patriarchy. I think in any culture it is the mothers, daughters, and sisters that have a lot of influence on the males; growing up, we also had the concept *pessram pessram* (my son my son) culture. When my little cousin was born, we were all in grandfather's store; we heard that my cousin was a girl and were on cloud nine to get to the hospital. My mom's family waltzed in, and all were saying, "Oh my god, it is a girl, we are so excited." But my dad's family said, "Oh it is not a boy, you didn't give the family a boy."

Women were praised and seen as activists, movers, and thinkers in my family. I feel that with *pessaram* (my son my son), it made them set up a new idea, that if they treated the daughters the same way the boys were treated, we wouldn't have this problem of one gender taking a hammer to the knees of the other gender; so no gender would take advantage of the other.

Even now, we are perpetuating female slavery. A lot of women play an important role in this.

How do you experience your voice under patriarchy?

There was a show I curated in MOCA Tehran, in 2007. I was the only female in the museum who was not serving tea. In Iran, there is no physical contact; everything is done with a look in the eye and a handshake, but if you are a girl, no one looks at you, and no one touches you.

So I am sitting at the computer and saying, "Oh, these are the artists I want to show, this is Bill . . ." and I am showing some men what they need to look at. But instead they are looking at the ground; they are not looking at me, not acknowledging me. It is this complete wall. If you are a girl, you are denied all sorts of things, basic human rights.

Curating this show, I was showing the viewers all of the artists' work. There were some famous artists, and I was showing them a video by this person who took credit for curating the show, who was in France 2 months before the show began and still there 2 months after the show ended. He did not even see the show; his brother did, and instead of looking at the work, the brother said, "Oh, I want that laptop, it was my first

apple laptop.” He took it from me, and it is funny, he said something about the laptop and we went outside, and my mother told me that “if you want this show to happen, you need to hand him the laptop right now,” and I said, “No mom, you are mistaken.” And we were standing outside arguing, and he comes out and says, “What is going on?” And my mom was talking about the computer, but I said *ingabel shoma ra nadareh*, meaning that this is of no value, you can have it, and he said, “Oh no, it is a great laptop,” and he took it. And I said to myself, “Oh, my laptop is my life, you just took my external brain.” I needed to reboot and come out with a different game plan, and he was like, “give her whatever she wants, make her catalogs, we will talk tomorrow.”

I went in the next day and they said, “Oh, he left the country last night, he is in France, he is not coming back for the summer and you will never see him again.” So he left and I ended up curating this show, and the museum director . . . came and stood in front of curtain, and they had all the TV people, and they had all the other directors and all these men that I had never seen. I had been working in the museum for 3 months, I had only seen five of the 30 men who were standing there taking credit for my work, and there is the curtain, and at the podium they are all talking, and my mom and I are standing in the corner. I have pictures of that, and the dude is saying, “I am so proud of myself for curating this show, and bringing this artist to Iran, I see a solo show where we are going to collaborate, the artist and me, and I am so awesome”

The curtain falls and people come to ask him questions, and he says to me, “Hey you, come here,” and every time there was a question about the work he would put up his hand, and I would step in and answer the questions, and step aside. I just gave them the info and I stepped aside. By the time we got to gallery four . . . I don’t know if you have

been to MOCA Tehran, it has nine huge galleries in a giant circle. Farah built it before the regime fell, and it is the most modern, contemporary thing we've got in Tehran; it is gorgeous.

So, by the time we get to the fourth gallery, we have paintings of Geisha, and Baskin Robins, and all these things that are happening in Iran that no one is allowed to talk about, like how one of largest exports from Iran is women, girls who are kidnapped and sold to Arab countries; but we are not allowed to talk about it. AIDS is an epidemic in Iran, but we are not allowed to talk about it, and doctors who try to help people with AIDS go to jail.

There was also a Masionic terioki . . . a watercolor painting from the 1970s, done in this Japanese style. I don't know if you anything about the artist Jun, but a big part of what set the revolution in Iran was *Junun*, this South Korean soap opera. So Japanese painting is really big in Iran. Everybody was going to him and saying, "In Iran, you have these issues . . ." and I said, "I don't have an Iranian artist willing to do this . . ."

And they all go to gallery four, and at that point everyone was panicking, and I just disappeared. I said, "Alright, apparently I didn't do anything, I didn't get credit for anything, I will step aside."

And it was so funny, when the big-wigs were coming around, the kids from the university hid their phones, but when I was there they would take pictures of the art and call their friends and say, "Get over here, right now." It was awesome, and by the time we got to gallery nine, the artist Bill comes out of a pool of water, naked. It could not have been timed better, because all the TV people left me alone, because they thought I was nobody. But all the artists and their families, and all of the gallery people, they all

knew me, and they were bringing me flowers and paintings and *baglavah* and nuts and stuff. They were thanking me and they kept giving me stuff, and I ran putting it in the museum vault, and by time I was in gallery nine, I had a bunch of flowers and stuff around me.

Meanwhile, the big mucky-mucks were coming in and seeing this giant gallery, the size of a football field, with one giant screen in the middle showing Bill's work. So they come in and they look at Bill's work, and he gets out of the water naked, and they look at his wet ass and they freak out. They try to get the big crowd of *mullahs* to go through the gallery quicker, and they get halfway through the gallery and I see them go "Thank God, it is over." But they didn't realize that I had made it so that Bill's work was projected from both sides. It was hilarious. The evil guys who took credit for everything were not in the country, and all the people that worked in the gallery and knew about art and knew what was happening, they all got fired because of art.

When I was in the museum setting, the only art in this giant museum was on how women should wear Islamic outfits, just different versions of Islamic *hejab* across the entire museum. You couldn't have actual art. What the hell is that, not even having actual art? I am a girl, I have been serving you tea, and instead of looking at the work, you were seeing the laptop you wanted. Not my problem, seriously. So that whole thing ended, and I went back in 2009 and I did a whole thing on *Tandis* magazine, and all of it was free, and I put an ad in *Hamshari*. This was in the middle of 2009, when supposedly they couldn't stifle your voice.

But then we were arrested in 2009, we were blindfolded and they pulled us out of a vehicle; there was supposed to be a protest in Vanak. When we drove by, there were a

lot of cops; we went around twice and they pulled us out of the car. It was a big, scary thing; they grabbed Tom's hand because he had a camera. He thought he was being robbed, so he dropped the camera and pulled his arm in, and put his hand behind the guy's head. He smacked the dude's head against the little *paykan*, and all I heard was our little dinky *paykan* shake, and then some angry dude is literally this far into our car, with his mouth foaming. I had never seen a scene like it; it looked like a nightmare, like a movie. It did not look real at all. I was looking at what is happening, and it seemed like a side of the car was disappearing, and I know that is not what happened. I know they opened the door, and the next thing I knew, I was on the floor and I was wearing these shoes, and they were really thin, and after that I was on the asphalt.

I was hot; they took us into a trailer and there were six guys sitting on benches behind me, and one guy in front of me, and I remember they kept yelling questions at me. As I soon I opened my mouth to say something, they would scream at me for talking. It was just like this circular thing of yelling; there was nothing I could do to make it right, and that is when I remembered everything I had learned creating that show in MOCA. I realized that the more I looked at them, and tried to get them to look at me like a human being, the more it would piss them off, and they would think I am a whore. I just need to look at the floor, like they are looking at the floor. Because they are not looking at you . . . when they think you are a whore, because they start projecting all their sickness and delusions onto you, and start hating you because they hate themselves so much.

So I kept looking down while they asked me questions, and I answered all the questions, and I filled the forms in English and then they realized . . . I remember the dude that pulled us out of the car going, "Give them to me, I caught them, they belong to

me,” and the dude that was interrogating us said, “They are *kareji* (strangers), go find someone else.” At that point I said, “I will do whatever you want, don’t give us to the crazy guys.” They took us to three other places. It got scarier and scarier, and if I talk about it I will start crying, and we won’t be able to finish this interview.

The next day they let us go, but really late. When we got home my jaw wouldn’t move. At the end, when we were blindfolded and we were sitting with our heads between our legs in the car, and we didn’t know where we were going. The last place we ended up at was an army base, and they made us walk, and we were in the middle of nowhere, and we were walking and we got to some weird place, and when we got there they were like, “Holy hell, they are *Karegi* (foreigners), we are not taking them.” Nobody wanted to take us home, and I didn’t know what was going on. In the end, I remember I was in the car, and the further we got away from that place, the less my jaw moved.

I remember the next morning, I am sitting in my aunt’s house, sitting against the wall, sitting there asking, “Holy hell, is this really happening?” We are Turks, and they are saying, “Have some *barbari* and *panir*,” and I say, “I can’t even talk to you, how do you want me to chew on some *barbari*?” So I am sitting there, I am not able to have breakfast, I am just feeling cagey, like an animal. I was not trusting anyone, sitting against the wall and looking at front door. I had this feeling, that if I just sat there and looked at the front door, nothing bad would happen.

My mom comes home and opens two giant doors in my aunt’s place, and she comes in laughing her ass off. My mom starts laughing when she gets nervous. She is saying, “They killed him, the guy, her friend, what was his name, they killed him, our

neighbors' son." And she is laughing, "ha ha ha," and I am sitting there and I say, "She is crazy, she is lying, it can't be true, I am just, no, no . . ."

I get up and go to the room where my boyfriend is sleeping, and I just close the door. I am just sitting there and Tom is like, "What is up?" And I am like, "My first childhood friend, they are saying he is dead." But he had a brother, a really annoying brother, and I am really hoping that it is his annoying little brother that died. I am just being hateful, and my mom comes in and says, "Oh, the funeral is tomorrow." I am sitting there saying, "I am going to the funeral, just to prove that it is not him." Just so I know it is not him.

And I go to his funeral and it is him. His little brother is the first person I see, and it is terrible, and I really didn't know why I had wished his little brother was the one who died. The boy who died, we were neighbors, and we grew up playing on each others' roofs, and he was my only friend, but then we moved and I really didn't see him again. Because the whole guy-girl thing, we had both hit puberty, and if we said "hey" to each other, it would be, "Oh my God, they want to be hitched." He had just gotten married, less than a year ago, and I had brought Tom so I could finally say hello to him.

The story is that he had a heart attack behind the wheel of his car. They could not find his shoes or his car keys, and he was black and blue from head to toe. I don't know how he could have had a heart attack behind the wheel, right before he was bruised from head to toe. His eyes were full of blood.

He was arrested at exactly the same time we were arrested, and going through our shit. His car seemed like it had been in an accident, but not a real accident. It was

destroyed from the top down, as if smashed by a million things . . . he didn't have his car keys. He was not found anywhere close to his car.

I was sitting close to his mom, and she grabs my leg and starts yelling, "I can't hear," and calling his name. I was few months older than him, when we grew up together. Because I was few months older, whatever I said ruled, so when everyone wanted to find out where he was, they would come and ask me. And I would tell him "Okay, now it is time to go home." So it was weird when his mom grabbed my leg and asked where he was. I felt like I was 5 again, and it was my job to find out where he was.

When I am in Iran, I just hang with my mom's family. My father's family is very patriarchal, it is the boy thing, and I can't deal with that. My mom is not a typical Muslim woman. She teaches children in elementary school here about her love of Jesus. She just does not care. She will adapt to whatever the main religion is, and be whatever they say, and then not listen to any of it. I guess I was brought up the same way, actually. The only holidays we celebrated were the Zoroastrian ones. At a certain age they realized that I had a big mouth and they taught me that I would get them in trouble, so my parents said, "Let's get out of here," and that is why we ended up being in the States. You know, they were not going to stifle me, but they weren't going to let me be killed either.

After the incident of the arrest, I didn't want to leave the house. I was traumatized. My mom forced me to leave the house because I was sitting in the closet in my aunt's house the whole time. She said we are going to do our nails, so I said fine, but I didn't want to be outside. As we were walking, two guys on a motorcycle came by and smacked my behind; I didn't actually fall on the pavement. I almost did. I remember

thinking the ground was hurtling towards my face. Actually it's really funny, at no point did I think I was falling; I thought the ground was falling up towards my face, 'til I caught myself in mid-air and realized I was screaming, and it was high-pitched screaming. I was screaming, and it was high-pitched screaming. I looked up, and one of the guys on the motorcycle was wearing a green shirt, and one of them was laughing his ass off, as if it were the funniest thing in the world. And they were going away, and the neighbors poured out of their apartments to come and inform me that it is un-ladylike to cry in public. After, I told my parents I really didn't want to go outside.

On August 23rd, I curated Masami's 21st. Three days later, I opened up his show, and as soon as I opened his show, my dad got a giant van and my mom, my dad, my boyfriend, two of my cousins, and I went on trip around Iran. And everywhere we went, I would just lie under one of those ceilings and wait 'til they were done, when we could leave. Everyone would tell me what to do, but Tom would come and take pictures of my ceiling.

I was pitiful; I was not brave at all. I cried and I lied to get out of there. I used every privilege I had when I thought that they were going to hit me. I begged. I cried. I felt a lot of guilt over most of the people getting fired from the museum after 2009. I think about my childhood friend, and I think about the body, about him dying. When we got out of there, I thought I was so slick, but I realized that I annoyed a bunch of people, and many were punished for it. They paid the price. I lied.

How do you express yourself under patriarchy?

I don't believe in marriage. I am never going to have kids. I want to be with my boyfriend 'til the day I die. I just don't believe in women having to sign their lives away, change their last names and become some body's slave, or *bardeh*. I have always had issues with that since I was a kid. So I am never going to marry, and I will never have kids. I believe in creating stuff, and I create stuff all the time. I just do it differently, and I am proud of other people for doing it their way. There is no one way; I have many ways that I create, and I do show those ways. I send little girls in Iran to art classes. That is my mission, to bring them to the world. I will turn them into artists. I have my own mission.

The thing is, when I was under arrest, I told the revolutionary guards that I am a PhD student in UCLA. That not only meant nothing to the revolutionary guards, it was worse than that. They don't want to deal with university kids.

So I turned around, and out of fear told the revolutionary guards I don't want to be in the States. It is because of my parents that I brought my boyfriend here, and now I think about how to get their okay so he can become Moslem, so I can become fully Moslem, so we can get married and have a dozen of Moslem babies to name after them.

My mind is already slave to this system. I submit in every which way. While I was saying all that, about how I will have children, I started to throw up. I lied. I begged. I cried. I threw up. It was so undignified; whenever someone says I was courageous, I wish I had my camera, to take a picture of how undignified I was at that moment. It was pitiful. Protesting on open graves in *Behsteh zahrah*.

That day in the protest, I realized who my mom was before I was born. My parents were part of the last revolution. They kept telling me not to do a bunch of stuff, but they were doing all that stuff when they were my age.

I have always been best friends with my mom and dad. I have never had a curfew. I never had anyone tell me what to do. I always had somebody to give me the positives and the negatives. They would ask, “Why do you think you should have something?” And we would talk about it, and in the process of me telling them why, I would decide if I wanted that thing or not; so every decision was based on me doing something, thinking it through. You don’t get that in patriarchy.

As a woman, as anybody, only you can best decide for yourself; no one else can make that decision for you. So when they come and say you are feeble-minded, *zaifeh*, incapable of making decisions, and therefore we have the patriarchal right to step in and make all the decisions for you, that is where everything goes wrong. No one is sticking to their life path. We are from the culture of Nazami, Rumi, Hafez, the poets who push you to be on your specific path, but all these other people, they are plucking you out of your path, taking your control away from you and giving it to someone else. To me it is the biggest issue with patriarchy, and I thankfully never had that. My parents didn’t want to raise kids like that.

I went to India, and since coming back I have done art shows. It was really weird for me. It is the small weird things that creep me out, and make me feel stupid, because I moved here when I was in 3rd grade. I came here, and the language, the rules that had been brainwashed into me, everything changed. I realized everything I had learned was not true, and when I came back I felt weird again. I felt I didn’t belong here; a lot of

things didn't make sense to me, and I didn't make sense to a lot of people. I just didn't feel same.

But when I went to India in January and came back, it was either make art or die. It wasn't a decision. I had been making art, but then I started showing that art publically, because I was living near these graveyards, by myself, and it was really taking a toll. As soon as I started turning my teachings from boda into art . . . you make art, you put it on the wall, and I guess you dissociate yourself from it. And the notion that art becomes its own being, its own creation, which is going to go and have its own life, that has nothing to do with you. As soon as I embraced that idea, it got a lot easier. Before, every time I would talk about all of this, I would have weird stomachaches and my jaw would hurt; my head would hurt, and I would get very sweaty and have panic attacks. And all of that still happens sometimes, but not like before.

I am able to articulate all the stuff that I thought I was articulating then, and kind of step away from it. At the same time, I now feel safe. As soon as I stopped trying to justify things, stopped trying to make sense of things like why I was here, and falling deeper and deeper into this weird depression, I started to accept the fact that all of that just happened. And instead of feeling weird that I am not the same person, everything looks interesting and new now. I am excited to be alive. Everything got better.

Life is scripted. Whatever answers they force-feed you, some answers are not appreciated. They are illegal, and certain things you can't say; you can think them, but you can't articulate them linguistically. I take all of that and do it creatively, and I find that when most people get angry, they don't think they have a problem until someone tells them they have a problem. They don't look into things deeply. I think a lot of other

artists don't make art that screams, but rather make something little and build on it, so that seven generations later, we can all see it. Basically, as long you don't stand there and scream into people's faces, you can do whatever you want.

It is just up until recently that I have been Gol X in Iran, and I am Gol Y here in LA. I do many things under the name Gol Y, and when I go to Iran I am Gol X, because I have two last names. I have been staying safe and saying what I want without having to scream it. I guess now I am screaming it in this work. So maybe I have to think twice about going to Iran now; it can get scary.

I think I have a lot of issues now, like I am somehow more combative. I am playing sports and I play with a bunch of boys; I need to win. I am better than the boys, because I don't care that I really need to win. I think this comes from my *zaifeh*, my "little person" or "weak one" syndrome. Women are called the "weak one," *zaifef*, in Iran. Responding to that, it makes me more obnoxious and more aggressive in certain situations. I think it is a gift I learned from my own family. My dad is really cool, my uncles and my grandfather are really supportive, and have taught me some stuff.

How does *abroo* affect you? How do you experience your sense of self?

It used to affect me a bit, but I really don't think it affected me much when I was a kid. I am great in *abroo bordan* (destroying image.) My father says that once we went to a relative's house, and I called my dad from there and said, "Dad, come here, there is fruit here." And that is really tarnishing *abroo*. My dad was seen as cheap. He is really generous, and when he goes to buy fruits, he buys the whole box of fruits, not just a few pounds.

I wasn't constrained with *abroo*; I felt I was going to live my life differently, so I will have better *abroo* points in somebody else's life that does not really involve me. If there is a break under patriarchy, or in a democracy, or anywhere in the world, having your own distinct voice as a female and being heard is really an easy thing. Even though you are the C.E.O. of a fortune company here . . . I think I am the kind of person that tries everything, that throws things at the wall until something sticks. I just don't give up. I have something to say and I scream it out until it sticks to something, even if it is to my own self. I scream until it regurgitates things, until it makes sense to me.

It has been enriching for me, being born in Iran and going to school there. The fact that you don't automatically get a voice there made me work 10 times harder. Instead of learning to do one thing one way, I had to learn to do it seven or eight different ways, in case one of those ways does not work out. So when I want to do something I won't say, "Oh, I am going to build this thing, and I am going to have it be perfect." I ask, what do I have to do to make this work no matter what, and make it last? When it does not work out, then patriarchy can come and help you. Whenever I needed help, my father, my grandfather, my mom, and my uncles came to my aid. They came, and we brainstormed. They weren't telling me what to do.

Where I grew up, I was told that you are a human being; you should just be yourself and not pay attention to anybody who says different. Growing up, I did not have a curfew. If I really wanted something, I had to come up with 10 different reasons why I wanted it, so all of the people who hear the reasons can hear them in their own way. We think there is one kind of language, one kind of articulation, one way of expressing

yourself, and that patriarchy is in charge of all of that. But that in itself is a delusion; patriarchy is in charge of shit.

We are the ones that give patriarchs that power, with the whole *abroo*, with the whole this and that. As a girl, my whole existence depends upon someone being happy with my decisions in life. I need to know I am on the right path. I am not going to lie about it. We Persian women have 10 different passports; we can't be ourselves, we have to be 10 different people to different people. I think that this is tiring, that this *abroo* is creating an illusion.

As a girl, it is being the dutiful daughter that crushes her own dreams to live with *abroo*, and then you get older and you are thrown into the role of bride/slave, and then it leads to being a mother. And the thing is, all of these are beautiful things, and I think some women would do it on their own if they wanted to, but I have a problem with the violent, vicious history that says that this is what they should be right now. I think it is weird that I consistently have to explain that, even though I will be with my boyfriend 'til the day I die, I don't want to sign paperwork saying so. Even though I love creating, I really don't want kids, because that is not the only means of being female and creating. I think that patriarchy and its illusion has power over us when we say, "I will take on these extra passports just to make you happy. I will be different people to different people just to fulfill roles of dutiful daughter, etc." Instead, we should just realize that being yourself is the best in all those situations. Then you are at peace with yourself.

Do you experience any psychological symptoms under patriarchy?

I have anxiety, just like my mother and my grandmother, and I don't want to deal with it. My anxiety is really high, and I have panic attacks. I think this is related to moving, to being born during the war. Everything that made me who I am is giving me a little bit of anxiety, which is good, but I am real cautious. It is a good thing that I have learned to use my anxiety as an asset. But I have enough anxiety in my life, and any extra anxiety, I personally cannot handle.

When it comes to my parents, I remember when we first moved, one of my father's friends, to whom I was very close, asked why I don't marry my boyfriend. When all that started, my mom ended her friendship with that person and that entire group. "It is sad to lose friends, but I won't let what happened to me happen to my daughter," she said. Because she was raised in Iran, she had to get married to my dad, who had 10 siblings. My mom had a whole bunch of sister-in-laws and a mother-in-law that were very intense, with all sorts of anxiety. When my grandma received a guest, she would read Hafez to them and serve tea and stuff. My mom kept me away from all of this. I really don't know how to cook and clean. I am picking it up on my own; it is almost like second nature. Now that I do it, I actually do it well, and that is scary.

Actually, the women in my family went out of their way not to pigeon-hole me to that, and I think it is because they had already suffered enough, and having me in the middle Iran-Iraq war . . . they had really suffered enough. They were not going to deal with bullshit, they were going to stay alive and be happy.

How do you experience your sexuality under patriarchy?

My first girlfriend was my uncle's friend's daughter; she was the love of my life. I had a lot of friends who were guys, but she was my friend too. I remember she loved water painting and I didn't, she loved to bike and I didn't like bikes. I remember when it was my birthday and they asked me, "What do you want?" I said a pink bike. I got that pink bike, and I learned how to ride it so I could pick her up every day, and have her sit on the handlebars. We would bike up and down the neighborhood from morning to sunset.

When my dad left for the States to get our visas, it took 3 years, and I was totally a daddy's girl. When he left, my world sort of stopped, but then I always had this bond with my grandfather, my grandmother, my aunt, and my uncles. Those bonds grew richer, and everybody kept saying, "Your dad is coming back," and finally 3 years later I got the word that my dad was coming back, and that we got our visas and were going to America. But by then, it wasn't like I wasn't getting my family back; I was getting ripped away from all my roots, from the only family I had had until then. It was just my dad that was missing, and I thought when he came back, my family would be whole again. But when he came back, it was to take us away from everything and everyone.

I remember my first girlfriend and I literally sat on the floor and held each other sobbing, every day after school. After a while we got tired of crying, and I think to her I was just a good friend, but to me she was my girlfriend, and I loved her. Oh my God, I was planning to run away and stay with her, but what was going to happen to the pink bike? What was I going to do all day long?

It was really intense for me growing up in Iran. I knew I was gay. It was like, if you were to close your eyes and imagine waking up to a world where all the billboards were geared toward same-sex couples, where it was normal to have someone of your own gender . . . and you are walking around trying to be normal in a society that is closed, and you are already weird as an artist, but you also know who you loved, and I loved her so.

Then we came here, and there was this other girl I was in love with in 6th grade, and then she said, “I am not going to be your friend anymore,” and I remember I sobbed. And there was another girl I liked in high school; I fell in love with Melissa, and I came to my parents and I said I am gay. Actually, I was walking to school with my dad, so I said, “I am gay and I am going to tell mom.” And my dad said, “You don’t have to tell mom, she knows, we all know, just don’t have that conversation with her, she does not want to hear it. Whatever, you are so young.”

It was so funny, because 6 months later I met my boyfriend. It was weird, before him I used to fall in love every day, like 10 times a day, but when I fell in love with him, I realized that nothing that I had felt was really love. We have been together for 10 years. We have never had a fight. We are really good at being in the same room, being in each other’s space and doing our own thing. It is calming and nice knowing that he is around, and he does not have to do anything except be himself, and I love him. Honestly, he could be goat and I would love him. I wouldn’t care. I always loved girls, and when I walk in the street I always find women attractive, but I also always find men not disgusting.

“But I don’t get it,” my friends ask me, “what if one of our guy friends hit on you . . .” and I will be grossed out. I have always known, I was sure about it, but when I met

Tom, I loved him. It does not matter what he is; he is my everything. We have been together for 10 years

Love is comfortable. It is awesome. I don't have to try, and he does not have to try. We are both who we are because we met when we were 16. We kind of grew up together, and grew our personalities together. We kind of grew up as the same weird person. When we were in India together, every time we left somewhere I was looking, and anytime we left the bus I would say, "Wait, are we leaving Tom behind? Wait, where is he?" And it felt like one of my legs was missing. Gender really doesn't matter.

My friend's mom took her daughter to Arizona, to get her away from me in an all-girls school, to kick the gay out of her. Talk about patriarchy.

Sexuality is like art, it is what turns you on. Patriarchy can't decide that. They can set up what is acceptable, but at the end of day you are turned on by what you are turned on by. It really does not matter.

How do you define your sense of self?

I am looking at my hands and moving them. At one point my hands were open, when the revolutionary guards came in and I started doing all the Moslem prayers. I have always used my hands, and always been aware of that. I guess I have been less aware of myself and my sense of self, but I have been aware of my hands, and that I can make stuff with them.

I am a vessel; we are all vessels to make stuff. I don't really think I have achieved self-awareness. I like to get my hands on everything I can, every texture and

every weird material I can get my hands on. I think I have always been interested in a sensory overload of life, color, and texture, of how to make stuff.

When I was in Iran after the incidents, I couldn't get past the thought of making art and getting my hands on something. It was really nice. I wanted to get my hands on everything I could, and it moved me past the idea that "Oh, I can't do anything, my body feels useless, I feel handicapped and I can't bring myself out of whatever." But it is good now, I know I can go out there and play with art and make something.

I don't have a sense of self yet, but I am playing with everything. How do I know what I am if I have not explored, not played with everything I can play with? How do you know you, if you don't know anything other than you?

How are you perceived by men under patriarchy?

Everything I was told was not right. I was 9 when I came here, and a 40-year-old man hit on me, and I was disgusted by it. Right here, in America, in a Burger king. I took that misplaced anger to Iran, and I was telling everyone how messed up all guys everywhere were. I feel like I was perceived differently every year of my life, like when I was 2, 4 . . . I was harassed. Most people remember me as a person who fought them, or threw things at them. I would even get other kids to go harass people. I was aggressive; I was obnoxious. I think because my grandfather owned half of our village, because my family was whatever, everyone thought . . . to them I was a child, they were not going to ruin their *abroo* by getting annoyed at me, like "you are so adorable, stay away from me."

Instead of biting people, I turned it down a bit and between ages 7 and 9. I would say stuff like, “My daddy isn’t here, he is in America, and I am going to cry if you don’t get out of my face.” When a guy would ask me to put on my *hejab*, I would say, “My daddy is not here. You are not my daddy, I am going to cry,” and they would stop.

I think I got combative in situations. I grew up being the only child and the only grandchild, the shortest and smallest child around, and everyone knew what to do around me. I had my only-child syndrome, and when patriarchy would come around to tell me to do things and make me smaller than I was, I would turn around and become defensive, and try to make them small. I would say, “How do you like it you are coming to me and making me cry? I will make you cry, I am not afraid to tarnish your *abroo*.”

When I used to bite people’s hands, they would look at my parents or grandparents and see if they would call me a “bad girl,” and they would just say, “I am sorry, she just learned how to do that, it is not personal.” As soon as parents say, “Isn’t that cute,” people would say it was cute. As people, we are really good at coming together and punishing, but we don’t come together in a positive way.

How do you perceive men under patriarchy?

In a *persaram* (my son) culture, there is this whole higher expectation that mothers or females are putting on you, by saying you are different from a boy. If you are a boy, you are better in some way. Whatever, they themselves know that this is high pressure, and I hope they know it is not true. But I feel that instead of bettering themselves, they put down the other gender, so that they can feel the *pesarmam* air, and that goes to the mothers of our culture.

Women are putting their sons on a pedestal that does not exist. The kid is going to grow up on that imaginary pedestal, turn around and fall down on real dirt. What is really shocking is that instead of saying, "Oh, my mother's expectations were all just a dream that she had for me, and they were unobtainable bullshit," they say "No, no, I must up keep this illusion, because if I don't, I am less than a man. And if all men are amazing, and I am not just as amazing as my mother thought, I need to be more aggressive." So, like me when I needed to bite someone to feel power, they need to bite someone to feel that they have power over them.

I don't think they are all the same. I think they are all different. I don't think any one way about them, I think they all have their issues. I honestly think that if we were living in a culture where women were in control, in the ruling class, we would hold onto that control. I really get why men will not give up the control; power corrupts all. Women who have to deal with patriarchy, when they come to power, they are worse than the patriarchs. They think, "I was made to suffer, so I'm going to make you suffer 10 times more." I feel we are at the brink. Yes, we can sit here and talk about patriarchy, how they held us back, but I don't think we will get anywhere until we take ownership of it, and accept that we have messed up with each other. And now even different generations argue, "Oh, wow, you guys are having it too easy, we need to make you suffer a bit," and I am like "No!" Hate brings more hate. Why are we doing that? Let's raise seven generations that all say, "This won't happen."

My impression of men is the same as women. I keep saying I don't like kids. When I was a kid I was running around and biting people, because I was a kid and everyone was supposed to like me no matter what. I don't believe in that now. I feel you

can tell who somebody is going to be when they are 2 or 7. And sometimes I see issues in kids, and adults say they are just kids, let it go until they are adults. But by then it will be too late; by then it will be a personality disorder. I think a lot of guys get away with things because they can get away with things. Nobody told them no until they were 18, and by the time they were 18 they say, "I already know everything, you can go fuck yourself."

I wish there was a series of word and letters we could stitch together to make everything okay, and take the power of this away. But I guess I love that you are doing this research. I think it is super-important. It really is.

But I also think, as women, we are really powerful. There are so many women complicit with, and involved in the preaching of patriarchy. As women, we have a big role in that. By participating in the myth of patriarchy being perpetuated by men, we give it more power. We should turn it around and say, "This is the illusion that you have created. This is your illusion, this is your disease, and it might be the way you see the world, but that is not how it is happening."

References

- Balint, M. (1979). *Basic fault*. London, England: Routledge.
- Baring, A., & Cashford, J. (1991). *The myth of the goddess: Evolution of an image*. London, England: Penguin Books.
- Barrett, D. A. (1997). *Through the forbidden journey of suffering and transformation*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Pacifica Graduate Institute, Carpenteria, CA.
- Bly, R. (1990). *Iron John*. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Bolen, J. S. (1984). *Goddess in every woman*. New York, NY: Harper Perennial.
- Branden, N. (1994). *The six pillars of self-esteem*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.
- Brook, R. (1991). *Jung and phenomenology*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Campbell, J. (1983). *The way of the animal powers* (Vol. 1). New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Chevalier, Jean (1997). *The penguin dictionary of symbols*. London, England: Penguin.
- Cochran, W. G. (1977). *Sampling techniques*. New York, NY: Wiley.
- Colaizzi, P. F. (1978). Psychological research as the phenomenologist views it. In R. Vaile and M. King (Eds.), *Existential phenomenological alternatives for psychology* (pp. 48-71). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Coppin, J., & Nelson, E. (2004). *The art of inquiry*. Auburn, CA: Treehenge.

- Corbett, L. (n.d.). *History of psychology, Part 2*. Class handout. (Available from the Clinical Psychology Program at the Pacifica Graduate Institute, Carpinteria, CA 93013).
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- De Shong Meador, B. (1992). *Uncursing the dark: Treasures from the underworld*. Wilmette, IL: Chiron.
- Dilthey, W. (1985). *Poetry and experience*. Selected works (Vol. 5). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Downing, C. (1991). *Mirrors of the self*. Los Angeles, CA: Jeremy P. Tarcher.
- Draguns, J. G. (1981). Counseling across cultures: Common themes and distinct approaches. In P. B. Pedersen, J. G. Draguns, W. J. Lonner, & S. E. Trimble (Eds.), *Counseling across cultures* (2nd ed., pp. 3-21). Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press.
- Eddie, J. M. (1962). Introduction. In P. Thevenaz & J. M. Eddie (Ed.), *What is phenomenology?: And other essays*. (C. Courtney, P. Brockelman & J. M. Eddie, Trans.), (pp. 1-23). Chicago, IL: Quadrangle.
- Freud, S. (1955). On transformations of instinct as exemplified in anal erotism. In J. Strachey (Ed. And Trans.), *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol 19, pp. 125-133). London, England: Hogarth Press. (Original work published 1917)

- Freud, S. (1957). A special type of choice of object made by men (contributions to the psychology of love I). In A. Tyson (Trans.), *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* (Vol 11). London, England: Hogarth Press. (Original work published 1910)
- Giorgi, A. (2006). Concerning variations in the application of the phenomenological method. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 34(4), 305-319.
- Giorgi, A., & Giorgi, B. (2003). *The descriptive phenomenological psychological method*. In P. Camic, J. E. Rhodes, and L. Yardley (Eds.), *Qualitative research in psychology* (pp. 243-273). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Goodchild, V. (2001). *Eros and chaos*. York Beach, ME: Nicolas-Hays.
- Harding, M. E. (1990). *Woman's mysteries: Ancient & modern*. Boston, MA: Shambala.
- Hillman, J. (1972). *The myth of analysis*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Hillman, J. (1975). *Re-visioning psychology*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Hopcke, R. H. (1995). *Persona: Where sacred meets profane*. Boston, MA: Shambala.
- Husserl, E. (1970). *The crisis of European sciences and transcendental phenomenology: An introduction to phenomenological philosophy*. (D. Carr, Trans.). Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. (Original work published 1954)

- Jack, D. C. (1991). *Silencing the self: Women and depression*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Jalali, B. (1996). Iranian Families. In M. McGoldrick, Joe, Giordano & J. K. Pearce (Eds.), *Ethnicity & Family Therapy* (2nd ed., pp. 347-363). New York: Guilford Press.
- Jung, C. G. (1954). Marriage is a psychological relationship. In *The collected works of C. G. Jung* (Vol. 17, pp. 187-204). New York, NY: Pantheon. (Original work published 1931)
- Jung, C. G. (1959). Psychological aspects of the mother archetype. In *The collected works of C. G. Jung* (Vol. 9, part 1, pp. 75-112). New York, NY: Pantheon. (Original work published 1954)
- Jung, C. G. (1982). *Aspects of the feminine* (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Original work published in 1971)
- Kendler, H. (2005). Psychology & phenomenology: A clarification. *American Psychologist*, 60(4), 318-324.
- Kohut, H. (2009). *The analysis of the self: A systematic approach to the psychoanalytic treatment of narcissistic personality disorders*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Lopez-Pedraza, R. (2000). *Dionysus in exile: On the repression of the body and emotion*. Brooklyn, NY: Chiron.
- Mantecon, V. H. (1994). *Re-membering broken bonds. An in-depth*

exploration of the phenomenology of the experience of child surrender.
Carpinteria, CA: Pacifica Graduate Institute.

Moghissi, H. (1999). Away from home: Iranian women, displacement cultural resistance and change. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*. 30.2, 207-217.

Moustakas, C. (1990). *Heuristic research: Design, methodology, and applications*.
London, England: Sage.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ornstein, P. H., & Kohut, H. (1978). *The search of the self*. Madison, CT: International Universities Press.

Perera, S. B. (1981). *Descent to the goddess: A way of initiation for women*.
Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.

Qualls-Corbett, N. (1988). *The sacred prostitute: Eternal aspects of the feminine*.
Toronto, Canada: Inner City Books.

Roberts, R. (1985). *From eden to eros*. San Anselmo, CA: Vernal Equinos Press.

Romanyshyn, R. (2004). Anyway why did it have to be the death of the poet? The Orphic roots of Jung's psychology. *Spring: A Journal of Archetype & Culture*, 71, 55-88.

Schierse-Leonard, L. (1983). *The wounded woman*. Boston, MA: Shambala.

Sparks, H. F. D. (1984). *The apocryphal New Testament*. Oxford, England: Clarendon Press.

- Spinelli, E. (1989). *The interpreted world: An introduction to phenomenological psychology*. London, England: Sage.
- Spradley, J. P. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Wertz, F. J. (2005). Phenomenological research methods for counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*. V52n2, 167-177.
- Winnicott, D. W. (1965). *The maturational processes and the facilitating environment*. London, England: Hogarth Press.
- Woodman, M. (1982). *Addiction to perfection: The still unravished bride*. Toronto, Canada: Inner City Books.
- Woodman, M. (1985). *The pregnant virgin: A process of psychological transformation*. Toronto, Canada: Inner City Books.